17

San Francisco

HOUSES

Dear Grandson Jack,

One of the reasons I so often call you a lucky guy is that you are growing up in San Francisco, one of the great and special little cities of the world. Your expanding interests – in buildings, automobiles, plants, animals, piano, soccer, and especially reading, which I largely share – made me think that it might be of interest to tell you some of what I did and why I did it. You already know about some of my work, like the houses on Laidley Street, so I gathered them with other specimens for you to know, as a related group, houses in San Francisco. Creating a house in a special place is a first ingredient in making delightful place for living. And these buildings belong to San Francisco like no where else.

My knowledge of and interest in buildings began to grow sharper and deeper as I was exposed to points of view by people like David Gebhard and John Beach. The idea of "low art" as a source of information for the development of architectural imagery in "High Art" works of architecture gave a structure with which to arrange my growing knowledge. Constantly viewing previously designed and built buildings meant that the more I looked, the more I learned. Huge numbers of buildings are not designed by architects. Clients, engineers, specialists of all kinds, even neighbors, have enormous influence on the imagery of many completed works. Surprises from this complex diversity has been a source of insight and pleasure for most of my adult life.

My first real step along these lines was a survey of every building in Eureka, California, in the path of a proposed freeway. The freeway, which was never built, would have erased a major chunk of mostly 19th century Eureka. The city is a kind of catalog of many types of architectural identity used from the 1850s until World War II, and in some cases beyond. I had worked for Frank Gehry, who's work seemed to springboard from an understanding of vernacular low art and High Art relationships in LA, in the work of Rudy Schindler for instance, and the visual traditions of a "Spanish" past. In different ways, architects like Robert Venturi pursued a creative path directly through previously completed contexts. And architectural writers like John Chase, in his wonderful book "Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving", celebrated the irregular ordinariness of the urban world around us.

Surveys of the buildings in San Francisco, where I worked with the City Planning Department and the Heritage Foundation (for San Francisco's Historic Architecture) explored the context of a single city where the row house building type more or less dominated. That condensation of architectural design opportunity could be a gold mine of inspiration for buildings whose appearance was not always obviously shared amongst themselves, or their neighbors. It occurred to me that within a row building context, buildings could, from a public audience point of view, simultaneously stand out as well as fit in. The examples collected together here exhibit those traits, and more. But I will say that some succeed more than others!

These mostly small houses are reflections of that type predominant in San Francisco, the row house, not commonly found everywhere in America. They span the years from about 1975 to 2005, whether or not actually built, and are arranged here to approximate chronological order. Most of the text is contemporary to the design/construction of each building. You of course know that your Dada built, or helped build, some of these houses, like Whitney Street. And you may be aware that your Poppa K, whether architect, historic planner, urban observer, or even part-time builder, has a vernacular focus on the expressive qualities of buildings as well a desire to celebrate many connections between indoor life and the surrounding environment.

The primary materials of these houses, like a majority of row houses, are cement plaster, shingles, and painted or stained wood or plywood. Their designs are usually about something in addition to providing shelter, solving problems, or choosing architectural purity. Some comment directly on their context, some involve a nod to previous useful ideas, some strongly respond to the theater of streetscape design, and some carefully and seriously explore owners design desires. They all seek to enrich the existing city in which they are deployed, and to continue to do so into the future.

My observations of other buildings through many years allowed me to distill, expand, and modify architectural impacts and ideas in creating these designs. For instance, since I "read" meaning from older buildings, I think it important to imbue new work with as many levels of meaning as possible. Since most architectural imagery is derived in endless ways from previous structures, it can be a potent force for invigorating an existing streetscape. That is a design strategy akin to writing – the same letters ever rearranged to constitute words, sentences, and paragraphs. Buildings usually have doors and windows, but an infinity of ways of making and arranging them exists. Every opportunity to link interior spatial uses with splendid, ever-changing light and views will assist in creating a most intriguing daily living environment. And small considerations will add up to larger effects; garage doors, painted dark, reflect the cave of space within when they are open, and call less attention to themselves when closed, since dark-colored objects recede visually and appear marginally smaller. Likewise, dark-colored window frames appear to increase the proportion of fenestration to material mass.

One last remark: since I spent so much of my time involved in various architectural surveys, and the consequent writing descriptions of buildings and their relationships, the years of that work have had a formal stamp on this little grouping. So there is a partial list of period publications of my work is included, so that you can read what others have said about these 17 San Francisco houses.

With love, from your Poppa K...(aka Jeremy Kotas)

With special thanks (in no particular order)

John Ezra Beach, Richard Hedman, David Gebhard, Bruce Goff, Antonio Violich, Jennifer Clements, Vaughn Babcock, Robert Venturi, Bill Turnbull, Charles Moore, Frank Gehry, Irving Gill, Mrs. G. Bland Platt, R. M. Schindler, John Chase, Mike D'Amico, Alan Hess, Ernest Coxhead, Thomas Gordon Smith, Sally Woodbridge, Michael Corbett, Robert Herman, Allen Temko, Tony Pantaleoni, Paul Shaffer, Jason Kotas. This folio was created by Kim Shephard.

Richard Sexton is behind most of the photographs, but the late Larry Harrell, Mark Luthringer, Travis Amis, K/P staff & others contributed.

Nominated for Landmark Status by PK

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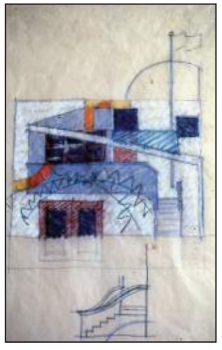
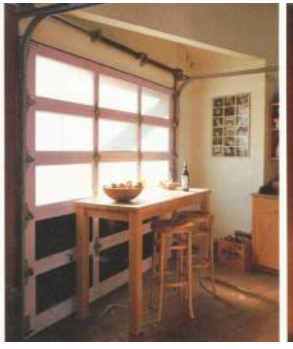
1 Laidley Castle

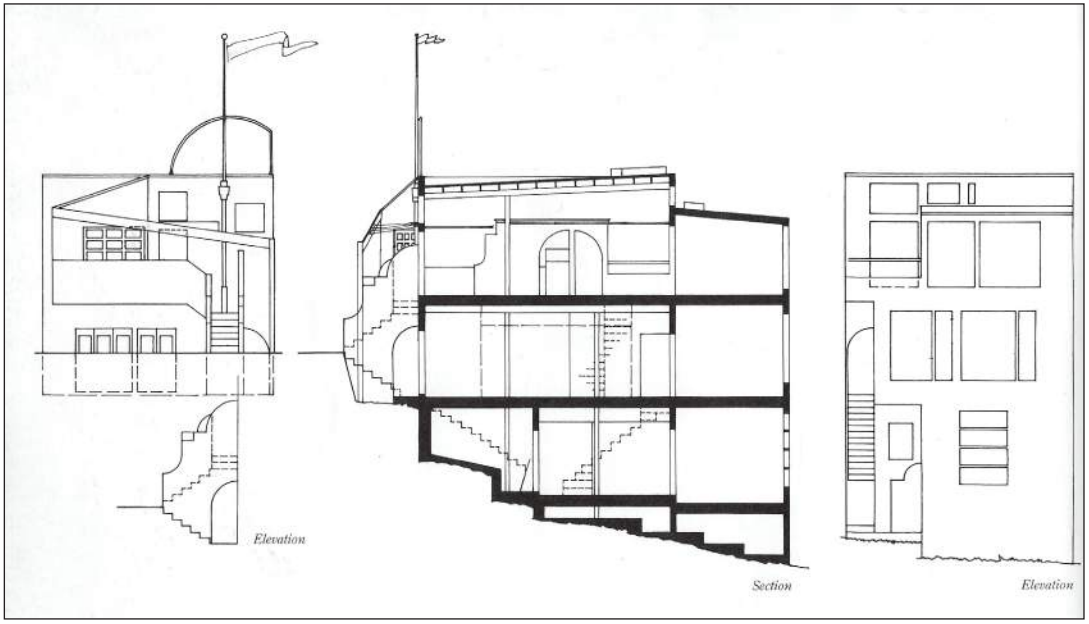
The design of Laidley Castle was approached as an exploration in kinetic syncretism, starting in 1975. In a tough stretch for any architectural theory, it was built over the next 5 years. The building design employed conventional technology, selective memory, specific utility, and urban site conditions. The upper floor plan is derived from a single space concept of alcoves (much like a rental street front shop space I had once occupied) in which each subspace is always partially visible but requires motion and use for completion. The geometry controlling the experience consists of a 16 foot square (octagon), the diagonal of which is rotated to form a golden mean rectangle the full width of the house. The overall 12 foot high main space is a 24 foot square. A shed-roofed dining room, attached as though added later, flanks a deck overlooking the garden and an extraordinary view of San Francisco, its Bay, and the hills beyond.

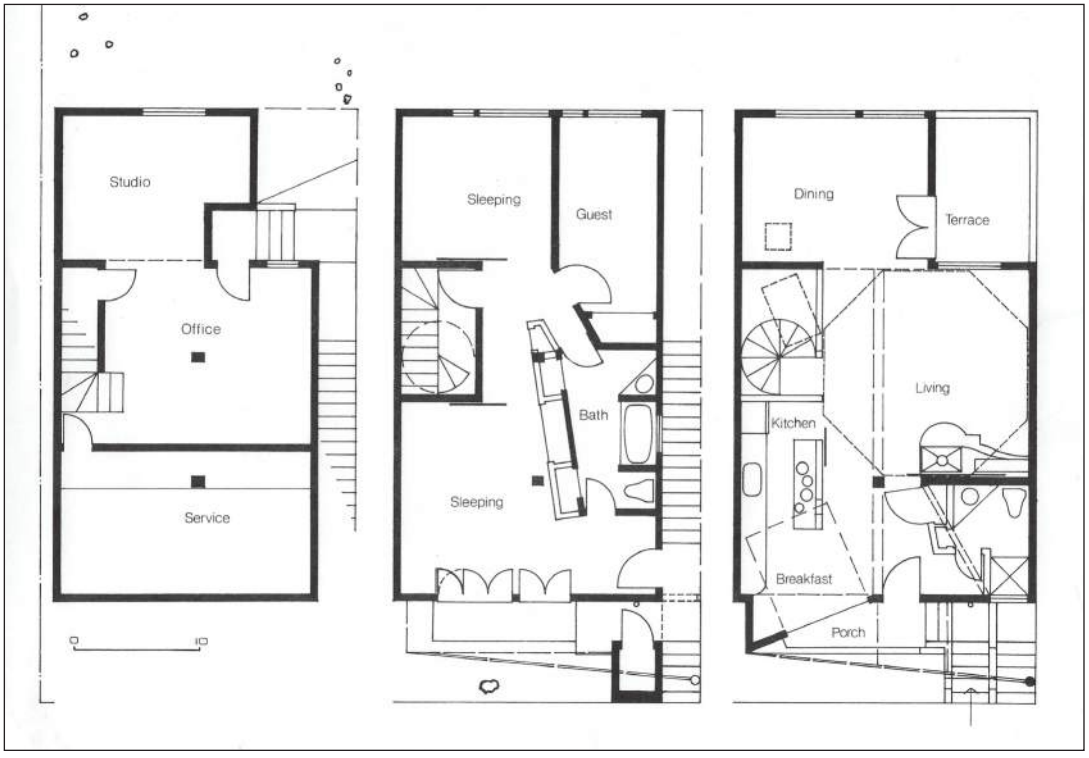




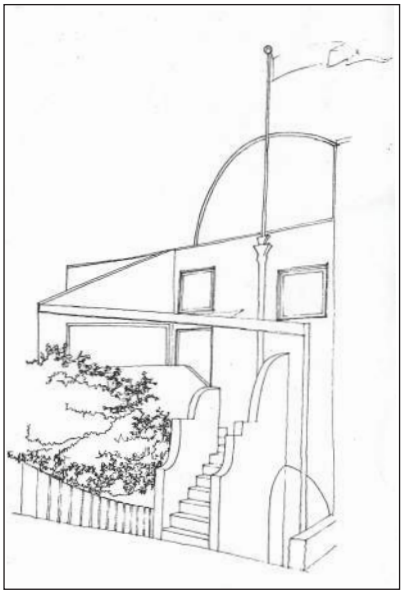
1 Laidley Castle

The design participated in the 1976 Twin Bicentennial (both the city and the country were 200 years old) by specific Yankee and Hispanic recall: A cement plaster skin, colored tile, Baroque parapet hoop, the exposed mechanics of a glazed garage door to invite use of a mild climate into the kitchen, and a flagpole (San Francisco was once nick named “City of Flags”). A 3-story stair admits amazing light to the interior of this row house, as do vernacular derived window patterns.

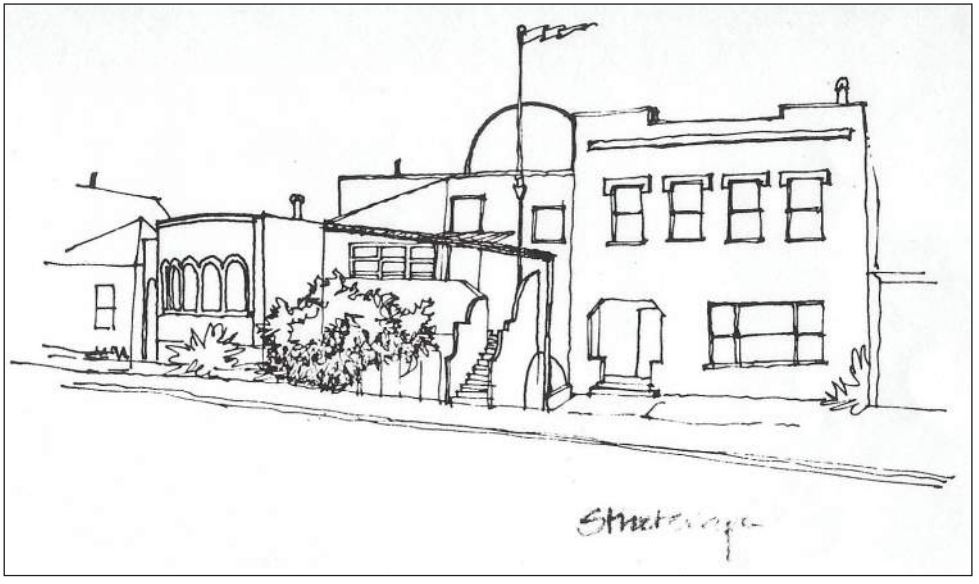

Elevation
Section
Elevation

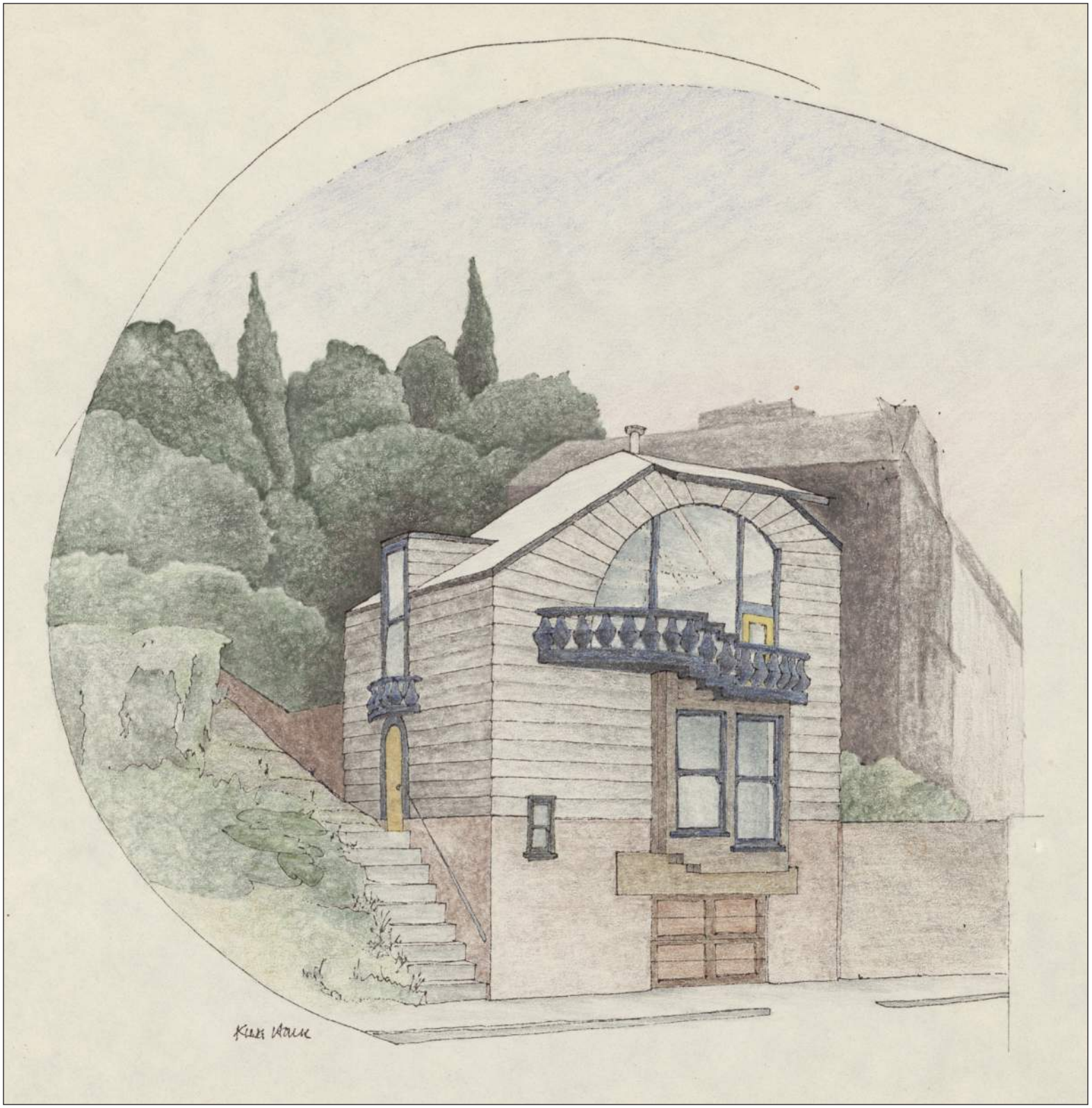

Studio
Office
Service
Sleeping
Guest
Bath
Sleeping
Dining
Terrace
Living
Kitchen
Breakfast
Porch

1 Laidley Castle

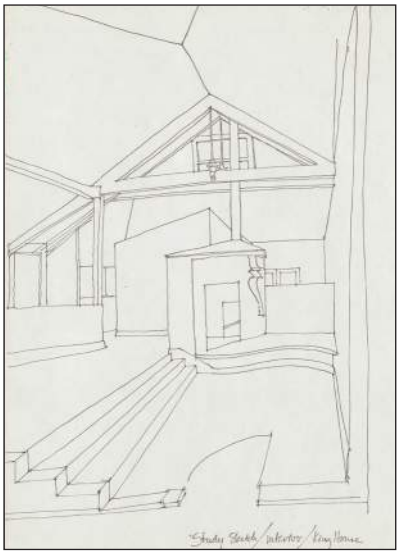


By implication, the house has an unspecified history, and in fact it embodies parts, especially foundations, of an earlier cottage on the site. Finally, the various scales, junctions, and uses of the parts of the building are united thematically by large broken Baroque curls which flank steps bridging a front garden “moat” to invite, even embrace, entry from the street.

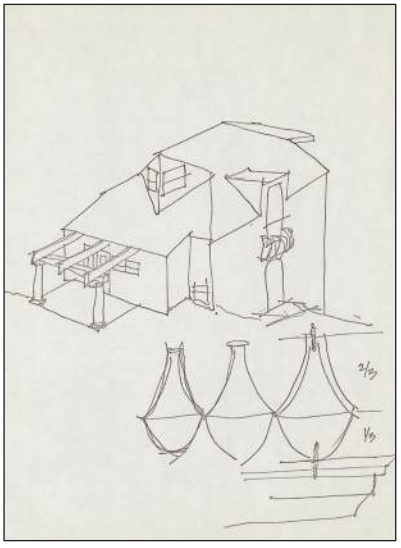


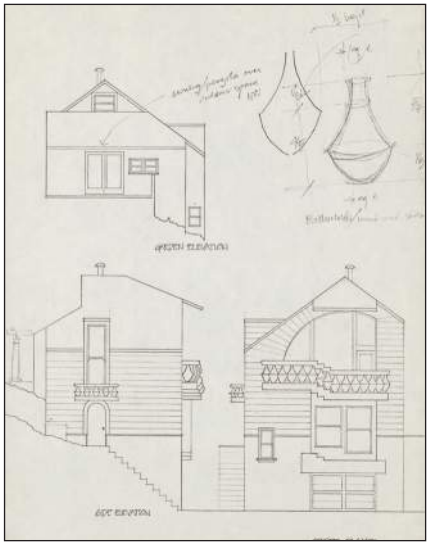


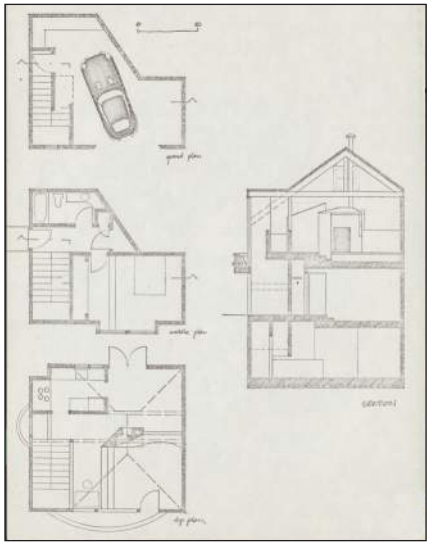
2 King House

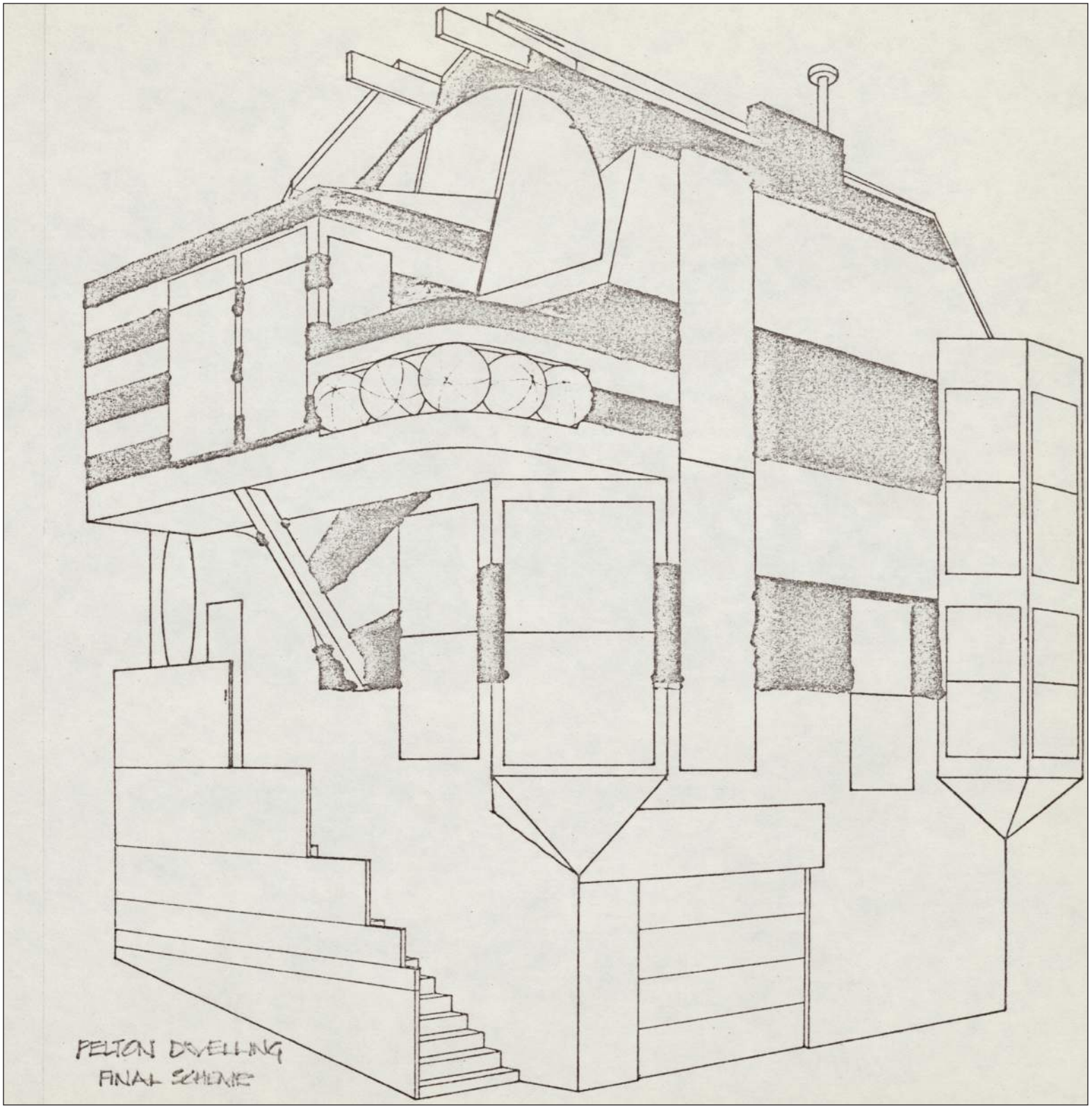


The King house is a proposal, at the request of an Architectural historian, for vacant land in San Francisco's Fairmont Park. The plan uses the steep site with minimum excavation, and raises living levels to sweeping views. Simple structural devising allows variation in room heights, and a small number of large windows admit amazing light, even to stairwells. Roof trusses allow deformation of the building's shape to control interior space and to focus views. Materials, chiefly clapboard, stucco, shingles, form and reflect the surrounding vernacular buildings as well as the overscaled decorative features of the larger building next door.



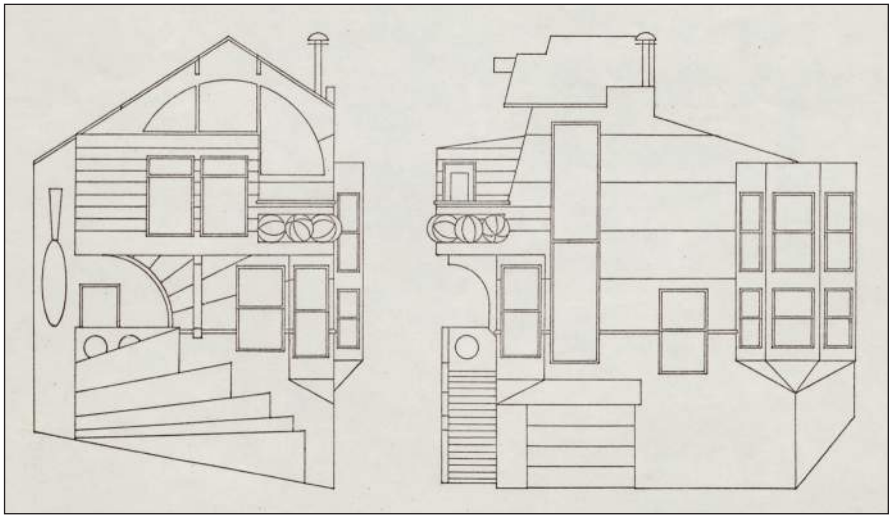


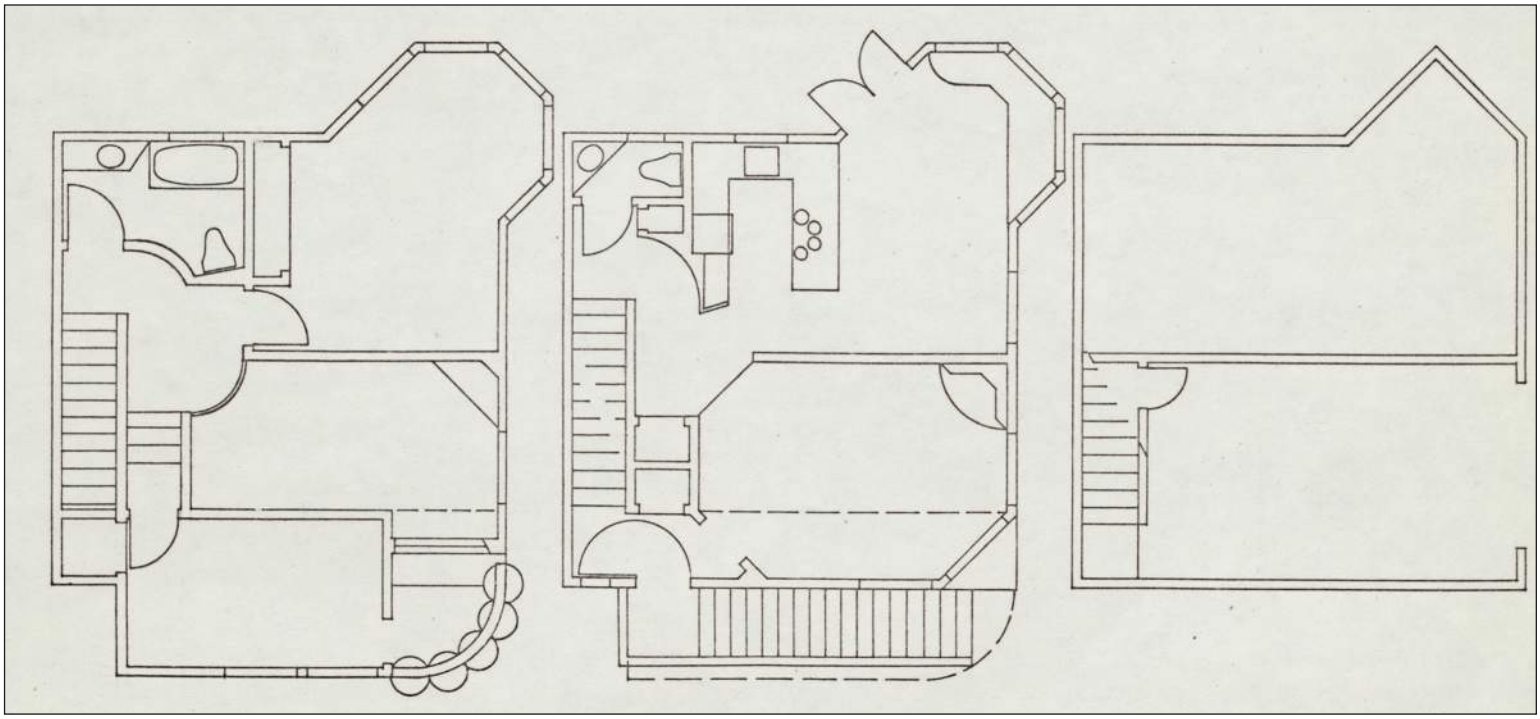


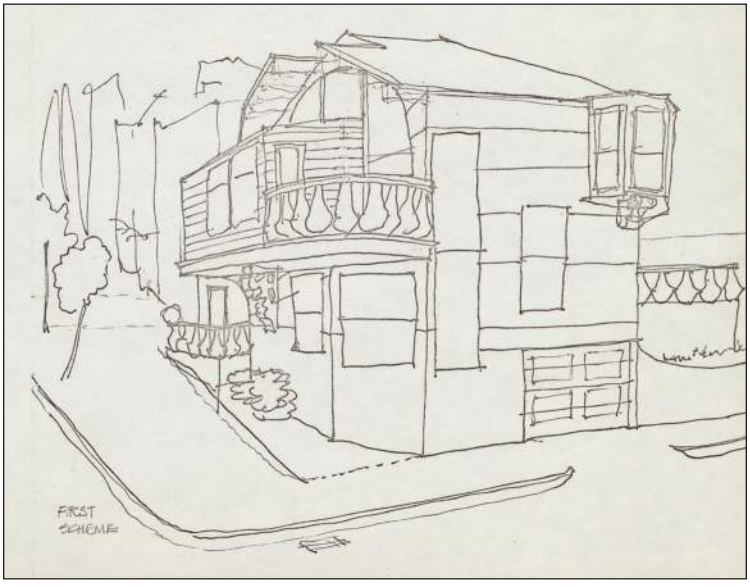

PELTON DWELLING
FINAL SCHEME

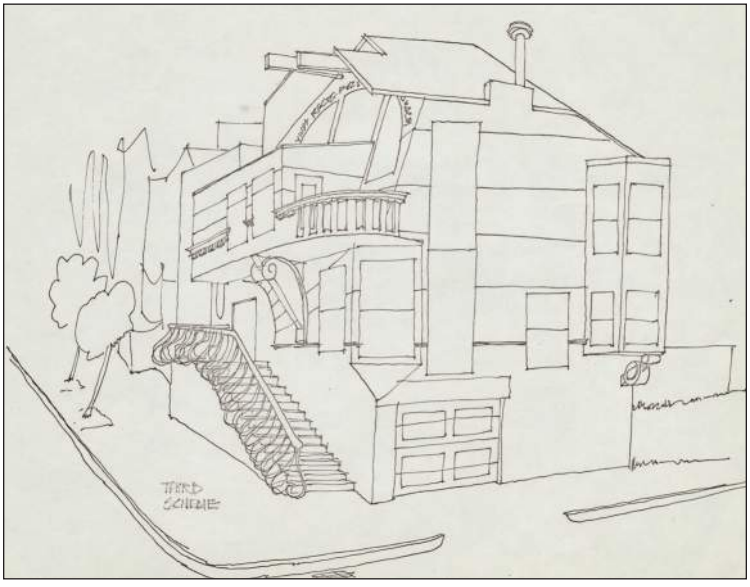
3 Pelton Dwelling

The Pelton dwelling (named for the 19th Century SF architect who promoted small worker's houses) is another design for a small house on a steep hillside in an older neighborhood. Plywood is used as in standard builders work locally but uncovered, and stained alternatively maroon and pale grey between horizontal sheet joints. A beach ball balustrade adds brilliant lively color in motion.

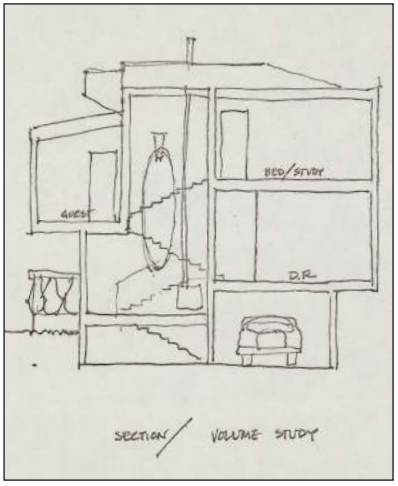





FIRST
SCHEME


THIRD
SCHEME

3 Pelton Dwelling



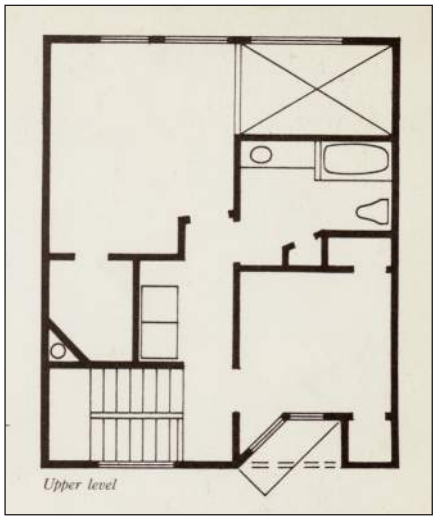
The house design is actually a stout manipulation of small rooms arranged around a large idea focused on a lightwell core. Sunlight pierces the house throughout the day. Only a small auxiliary heater supplements the sun and the fireplace. “QUIDVIS RECTE FACTUM QUAMVIS HUMILE PRAECLARUM” (whatever is rightly done, however humble, is noble), motto of the Rolls-Royce Company, ornaments the Roman bath window in dull gold above the glass, and “But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?” (Romeo & Juliet, II, i) echoes correspondingly inside. Other phrases are stenciled as wainscot, border and trim throughout the interior. Every expense was spared to make the house possible, solid and lovely.

NO
PARKING
IN DRIVEWAY
036 SUL

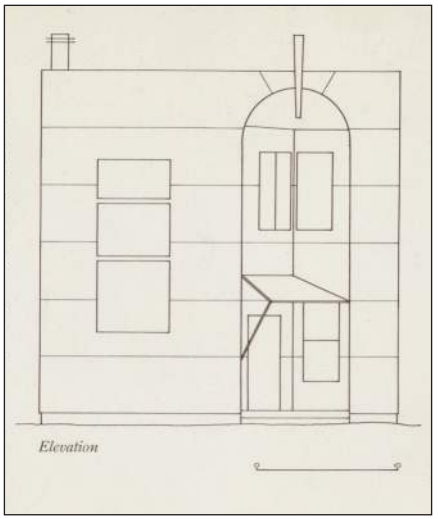
4 Bader Bloom House

The Bader/Bloom (Solar Energy Accumulation Retention and Conservation) House is a tiny house organized around bigger ideas. Like its 1870s neighbors, it is a stud wall construction but with plywood sheets employed horizontally for shear and sheathing.

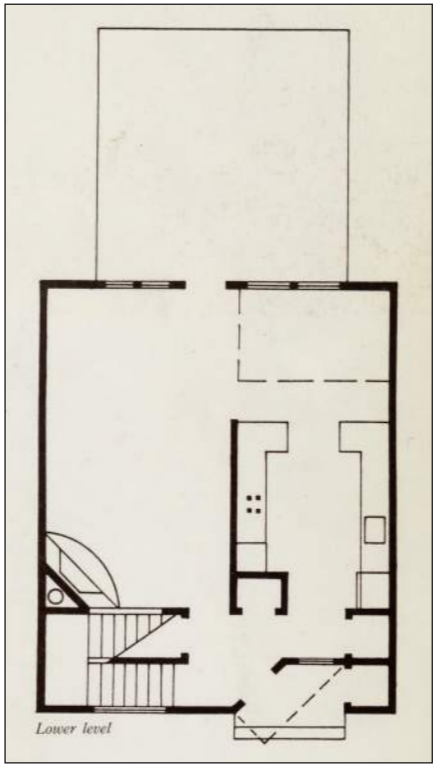
Plywood was the builders' material of choice for the side (blind) walls of row buildings in the 1970s. Here plywood mimics clapboard siding at a blown-up scale, and the result when painted can recall massive masonry of, say, the Italian Romanesque. It could address both seismic issues and the visual weight of this building, which was determined to be a good neighbor to the adjacent flat front Italianates. Gradating the color from dark below to lighter above as it rose assisted in this expression. Genuine light-weight thinness of construction is revealed where the parapet arch cutaway sports a chrome yellow keystone against the backdrop blue (or fog grey) sky.



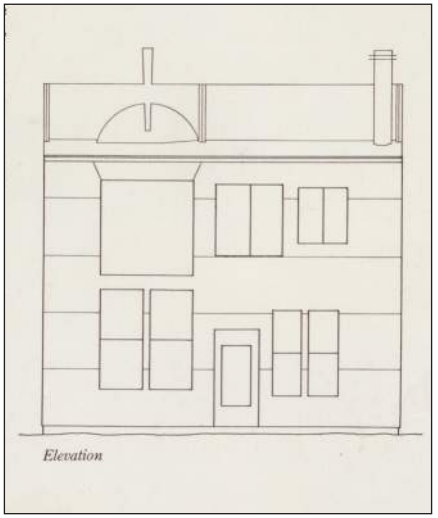
Upper level



Elevation



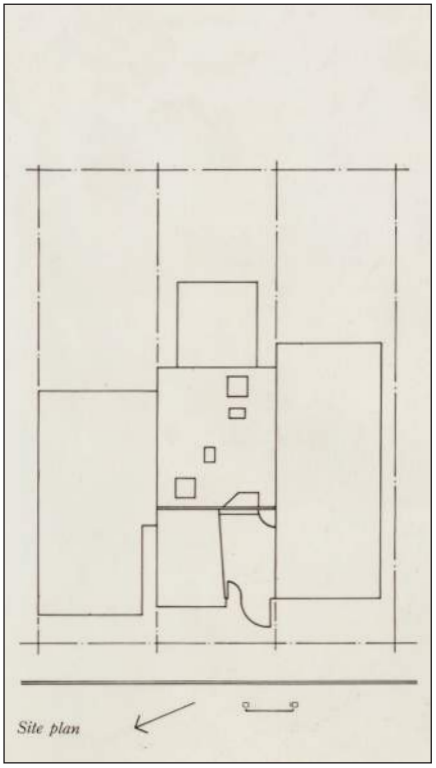
Lower level

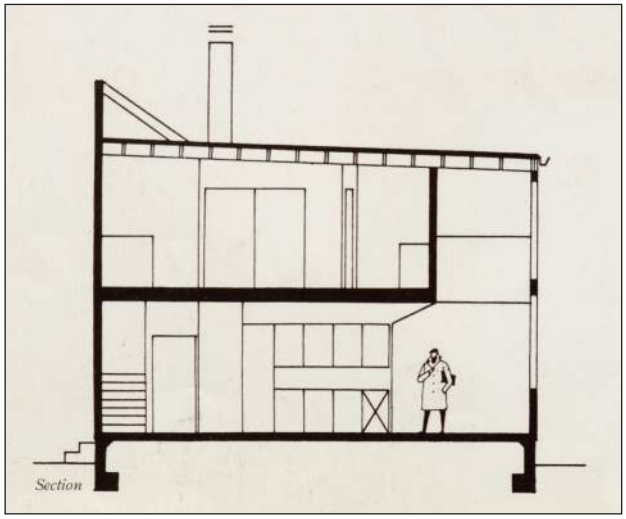


Elevation

4 Bader Bloom House

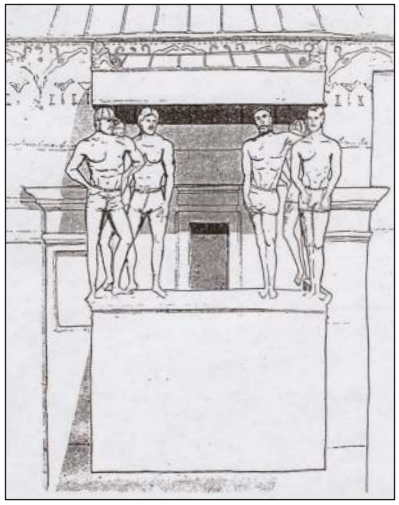
The house is carefully proportioned and extended vertically by the pierced parapet to suggest a 25 foot cube. The two floor levels are united internally by diagonally planned floor openings: the stairway and the two-story dining alcove. Sunlight falls onto a tiled concrete slab which is insulated to act as a heat sink, so a diagonal air circulation is set in motion through the floor openings. The fireplace is positioned to imitate this natural heat transfer. The SEARCHouse was the least expensive new house built in San Francisco in 1980, the year after it was designed.





5 Erechtheion House

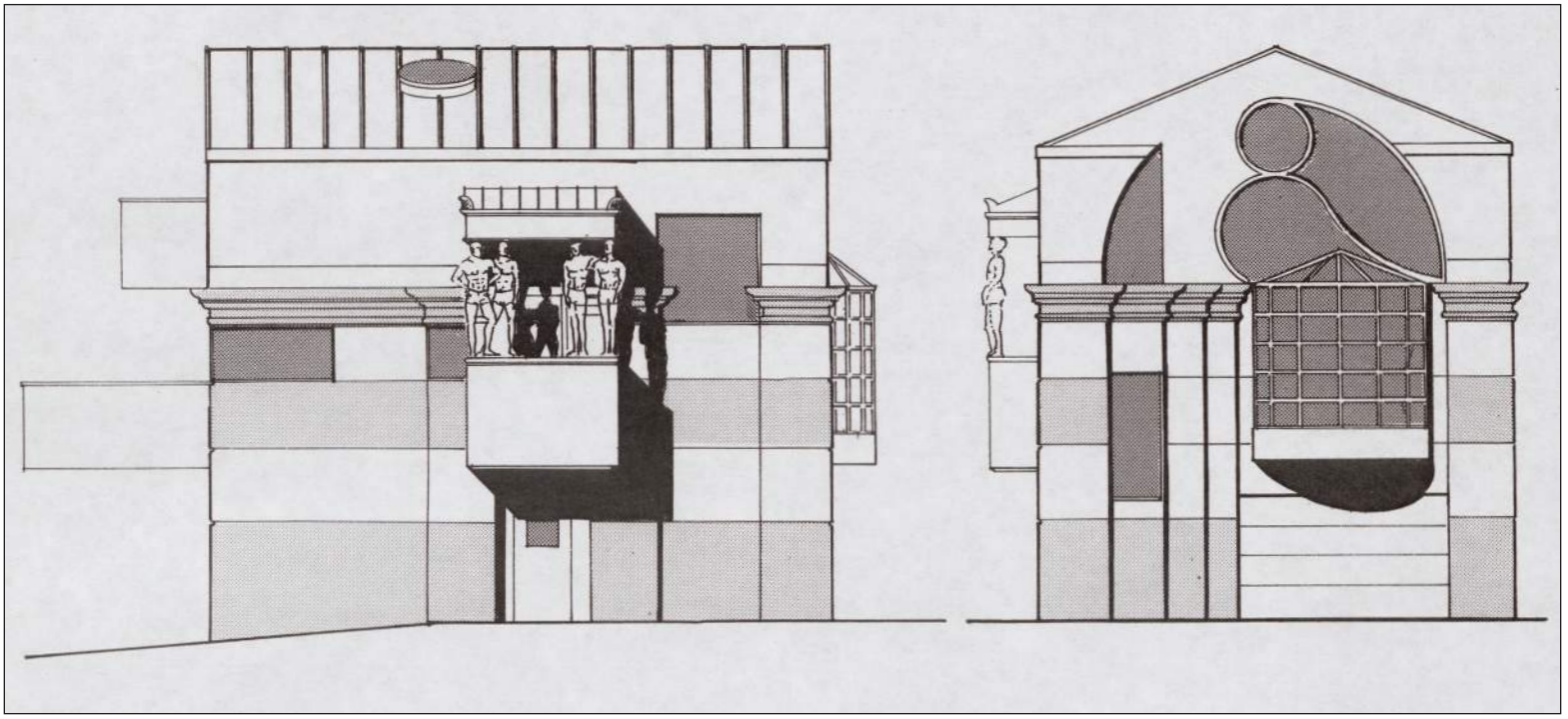
The Erectheion House is designed for two gentlemen who themselves erect them, and who wished to use a tiny lot atop Potrero Hill. A serene view of the bay and Oakland's hills above a garden was possible, and neighboring streetscapes encouraged a synthetic urban architectural display.

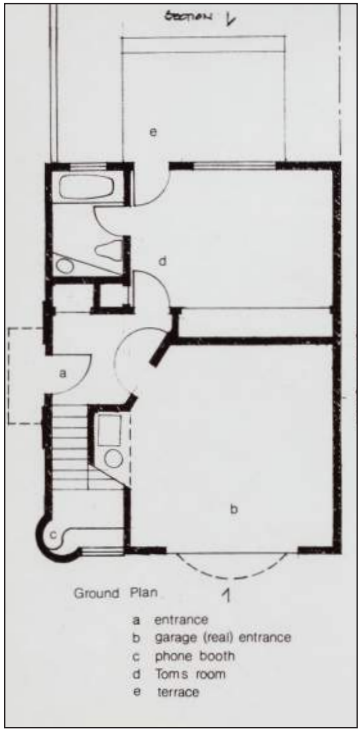


Porch of Mannequins

A box with a bump on its street corner met the budget. Inside, grandeur and spaciousness were achieved by varied levels for the main halls, a gentle slope over the dining hall, and a high ceiling above the common hall. A bay window is over lighted by amber, rose, and smoke glass in an incomplete French window muntin pattern. The rear outdoor areas are tailored as simple modifications of the Moderne. Interior structure is wood, but the great cantilevered deck smuggles steel inside. Two fireplaces share a semi-circle, and telephone booths are tucked inside the corner pier-bump. Terneplate roofing is pierced with an oculus visible from several levels. The Porch of Mannequin figures can exhibit changes of fashion and color according to season and style; they are drawn here in summer, a surfboard not quite visible to the left rear.

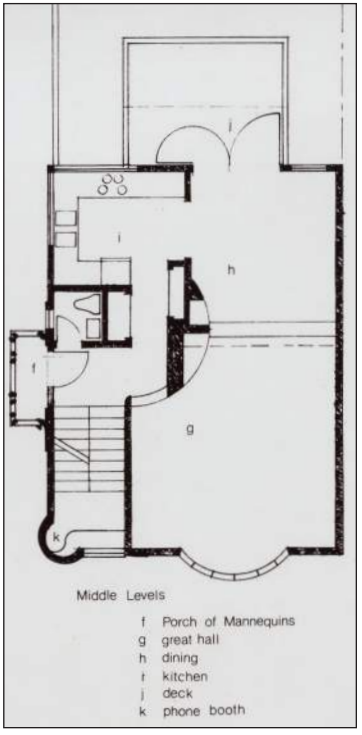
The stucco exterior is striped horizontally in alternate cream and maroon red, to subdue the vertical thrusts of indentation, projection, and visual support.





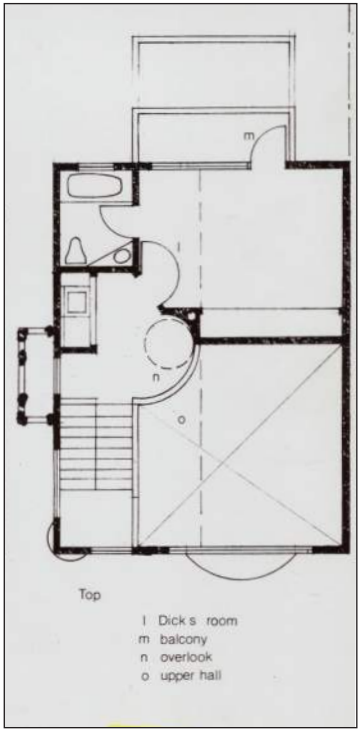
Ground Plan 1

a entrance
b garage (real) entrance
c phone booth
d Toms room
e terrace



Middle Levels

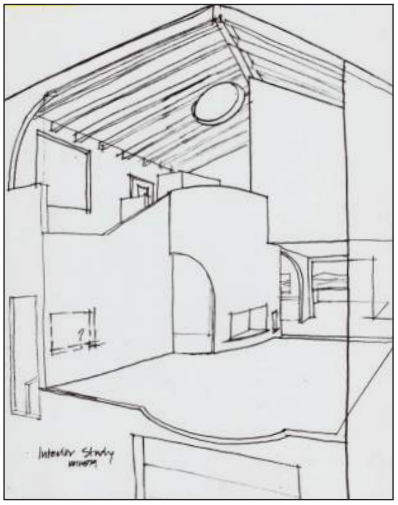
f Porch of Mannequins
g great hall
h dining
i kitchen
j deck
k phone booth



Top

l Dick s room
m balcony
n overlook
o upper hall

5 Erechtheion House



Interior Study

A frieze in pink, ivory, and transparent plastic domestic and drugstore items, embedded in fresh grey stucco, bands below the eaves and is interrupted by a drop in the pediment of white enameled wood adjacent to the curls of the flowing tinted glass above the main hall bay, and by a single 5’ 6” square of blue glass lighting the stairwell. The perspective study and porch detail were drawn by John Chase, who also selected the frieze embellishment objects and street activity. (His all-seeing eye reflects in the auto rear-view mirror, next to the punk dice.)

Erectheion House is a tribute to San Francisco life, a gay gift for its streetscapes, and fits both a prevailing vernacular urbanism and the Bay Tradition’s use of various modes of smooth and surprising reassembly. The wood joists, trusses, floors, and trim of the interior reassure the brown shingle purist or wood-butcher devotee.

Note c. 2017:

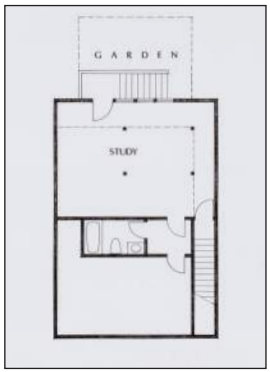
The Erectheion House design was in part a reaction to the work of Thomas Gordon Smith’s exploration of Roman and Renaissance models, as well as the exchange of Mannequins for Maidens in gesture to San Francisco’s gay male community. The Erectheion itself violated the usual conservative compact formal models of Greek temples, lending itself to a playful reconfiguration of form, use, symbolism and motif.

6 Laidley Box

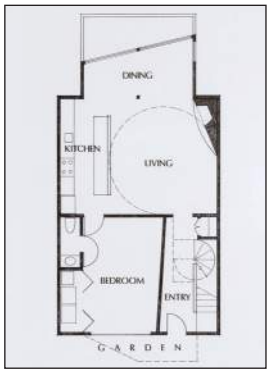
An architectural guidebook author called it “a hippie shack from Costa Rica”. A local real estate agent called it “a symphony of circles”. The New York Times called it “a gift box wrapped in bold stripes of cobalt and redwood”. Some neighbors experienced it as a great party house. The owner called it, lightly, the “largest one-room house”. An unusual building means many things to many people, depending on its audience.

It is a loft-style house, before that word was commonly used on houses. Lofts were often converted older buildings with a mezzanine away from a (usually) two-story window wall that served both levels. To bring the loft space towards the light, and add an exterior deck, an idea was borrowed from cruciform Byzantine churches, specifically like those in Greece. Built into a cliff side, amputating one “arm” demonstrated a greater vertical sensation with a blank two-story wall. So the central space asymmetrically morphed into an incomplete circle at the loft level in this house, and sheet rock arches almost dissolved the walls that linked and defined the space, one appearing punched through to the street façade. This large arch on a small cubic volume alters an expected domestic scale.

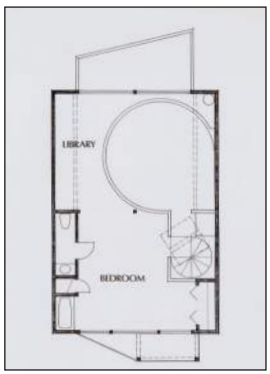
6 Laidley Box



Basement Plan



1st Floor Plan

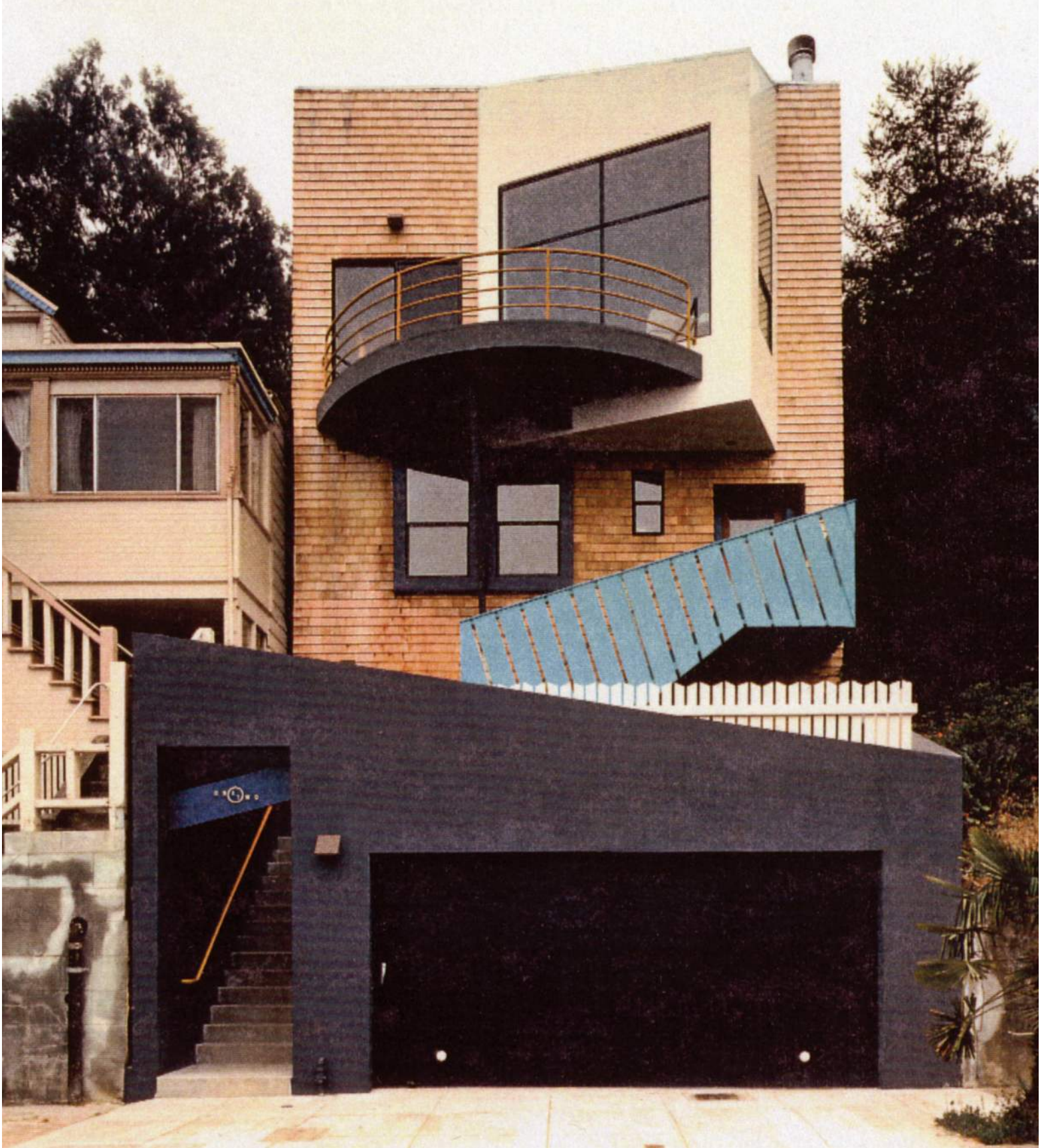


2nd Floor Plan

A column props a central arch, to demonstrate not a lack of faith in the principle of the arch, but its use as an inexpensive spatial manipulation shape in continuity with the others.

Bathrooms and kitchen were pushed along one edge of the house, to increase and free up the aggregate floor space. The 19th Century plumbing convention divisions of toilet/lavatory room, and shower/bathing alcoves, were employed. A fireplace was angled allowing enjoyment of views of the city and comforts of a fire simultaneously. Costs were controlled by the rusticity of the striped redwood siding, an open construction ceiling, a cheap ready-made steel spiral stair, and use of doors, windows, moldings, and some hardware recycled from the previous cottage on the site.

A great nighttime effect of the house, with the interior lighting just right, was a reflection of the circle defining the loft appearing as a halo above the city of St. Francis.



7 K/P House

The K/P house is based on the traditional builder's idea of the "cost effective" San Francisco row house, but with exaggerated emphasis on parts and composition, and a reversed interior plan. The house was conceived as a tower emerging from a garage base, yet nestled against its steep site. The tower extends across the land at the rear, in a sort of tail on the top floor. A single sloped roof, almost as though the building is but a shed, gently, economically, drapes and slopes from front to rear. A cloak of shingles engulfs the form, which sports a bay, a balcony, a stair, a wide-board fence rail, and a shallow window. The twist of the bay-angle (specifically chosen to focus interior views away from an awkward building block across the street) and the various similar plays of stair, balcony and garage, animate the façade, like a wooden Kouros maturing into Classical sculpture, the relaxed poise of contrapposto.

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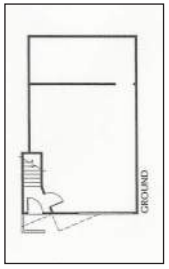
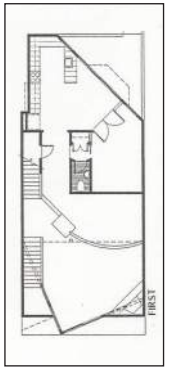
7 K/P House

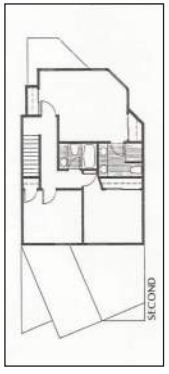
The vast majority of small 3-story San Francisco houses place the public rooms – kitchen, dining room, living room – above a garage but below the sleeping rooms. Here the normal pattern of sleeping rooms was partially reversed; the effort of an extra climb will be rewarded, however, by living among the clouds and by a splendid view of San Francisco. One extravagant gesture is a raised ceiling of the upper floor, to 12 feet at the front, and sloping to 8 feet at the rear. Exposed ceiling joists reduce costs and offer material contrast. The upper floor platform descends from rear to front, creating a grand view for living that also culminates the passage up through the house.

A sheathing of exterior shingles, similar to some neighboring buildings, was requested by some neighbors. This neutral and anonymous clothing is off-set by painting other aspects in brilliant bits of color, often also suggested by adjacent houses.

8 Diamond House







Diamond house is a replacement building for a previous shack on the site. Surrounded by small houses, whose occupants were fiercely insistent on a similar sized new house, we conjured up a collection of smaller “house” parts. We assembled them to reduce the visual bulk by delineating a streetfront base supporting a second story main room twisted off the geometry of the lower floor, and raising the rear half of the house to appear as a mother form. The suggestion of a house modified over time by addition is inescapable, and is enhanced by choosing material cladding differently for each form: cement plaster for the base, thin cast shingles for the second story walls and roof, and redwood plywood wrapping the rear upper half.

The architect Ernest Coxhead often employed the design device of disparate parts to suggest a past timeline for a new building. The use of such an approach increases the levels of meaning inherent in the building’s appearance and can mysteriously cloud the actual result with an indeterminacy of allusion. It also encourages the use of a greater mix of materials, and sometimes a play of scale, which can assist the desire to make a larger object appear as smaller than it actually is.

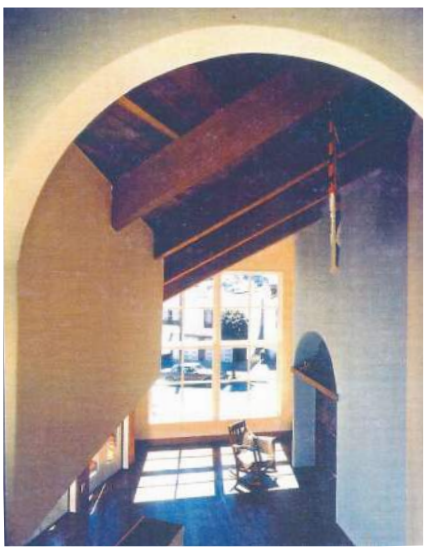
CAVE·CA NEM

8 Diamond House

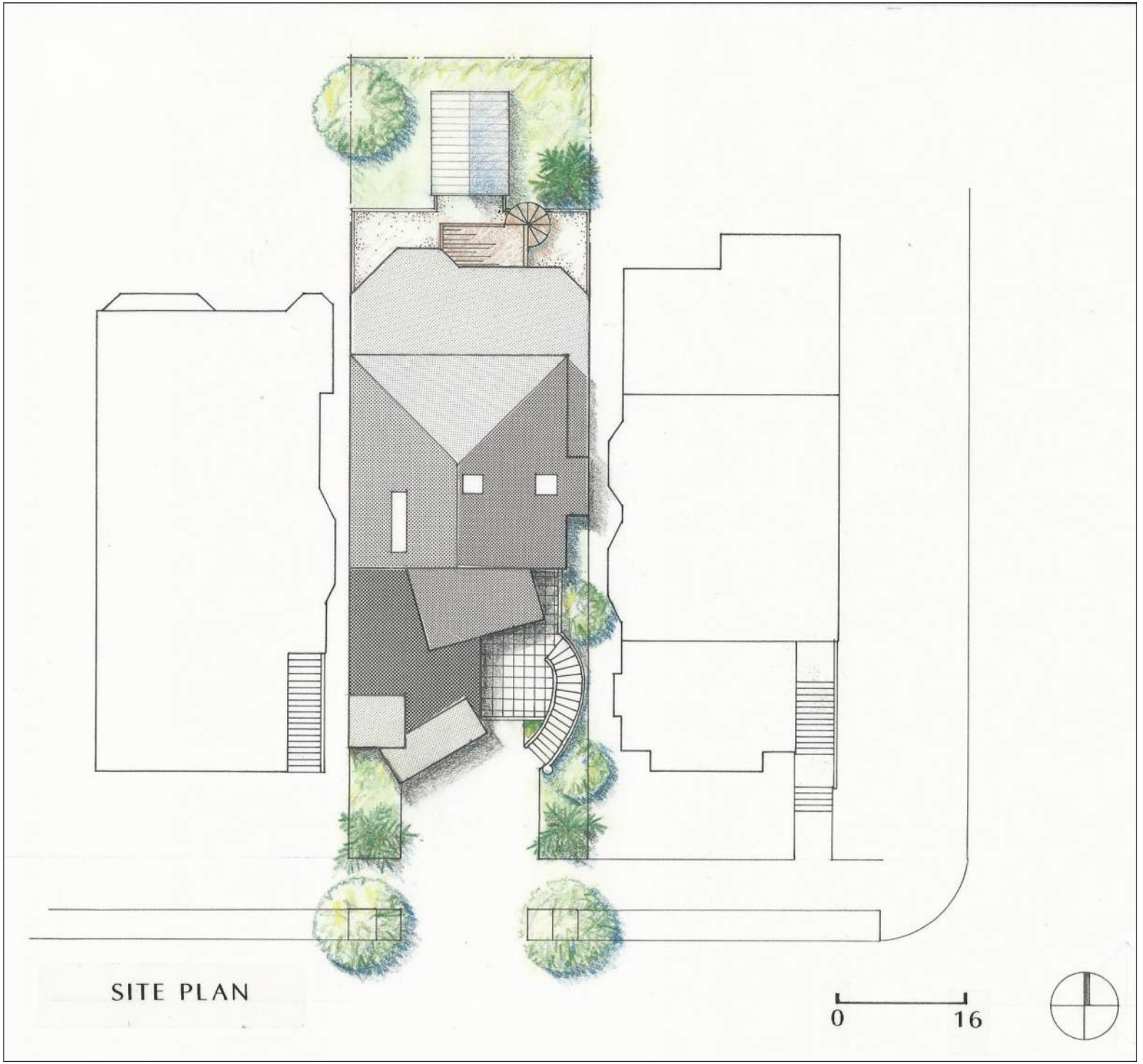
A further consequence of this approach creates a fusion of forms, as in the second floor streetfront where the window bay merges seamlessly with the main room from which it projects. The twist of this form also directs the focus of the bay, and the room it illuminates, to a view downhill diagonal and across the street, to increase the sense of openness experienced when inside that room.

The rear half of the house is elevated above the front to fit the hill side and minimize excavation. The rear wall also angles to capture a view similarly to the angled bay at the front. We allowed the Diamond Street name to dictate (a diamond is a girl's best friend: why not a house?) some of the imagery which decorates pieces of the house – a garage door "diamond" as popular in the 1950s, interior tile work, the placement of the thin cast square shingles diagonally, in a "diamond" pattern. The red sandstone paint color of the base affirms the classical principle of elevating lesser, lighter materials above those considered more permanent. Even on interior public spaces, this architectural principle is used in the application to ceilings of thin plywood panels. This modestly sized 3 bedroom house is around 1800 square feet.

9 Ulloa Street



On a regular street lined with synthetic Hollywood-image 1920s Mediterranean merchant-builder houses, our site, near a corner, suggested possibilities of a far-reaching house which tied itself not just to exigencies of budget, program and neighborliness. As in Maybeck's urban Young house nearby, the front of the house is divided into in- and out-door domains; an open terrace flanking a major room is reached from the sidewalk by a curved set of stairs. The stairs – generous, inviting, polychromed – lead to the foot of a tower set on the terrace. Floating above head height are three trellis "trophies" (as we called them), stag-horns that abut the tower and salute arrival. The top-heavy tower mass covers a porch void neatly erose from the tower leaving only a slender stick and arch for support. The twist of the tower's setting (off the orthogonal alignment of the house proper) does not quite match the angle of the enormous, seemingly undersupported, bay window. Both realignments are oriented to specific views, of the distant coastal range falling into the Pacific, and of nearby Mt. Davidson, respectively.


SITE PLAN
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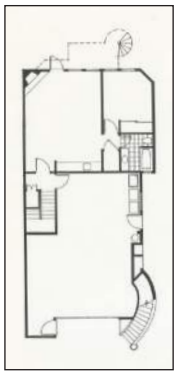
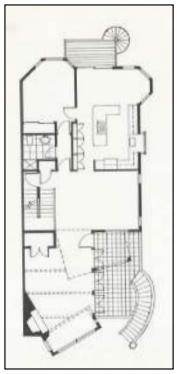
16

9 Ulloa Street



Ground Floor



Middle Floor

Upper Floor

Compared with the older buildings nearby, the casual conventions of stucco, tile, flatness and thinness, and a vocabulary of curves, angles, flat tops or sloped, have only been redistributed. New meanings and experiences arise from the rejumble. Inside, one's first view is of a baby grand piano at eye height, on a stair landing, suggesting lounge-room comforts or the levitation of music, while simultaneously blockading advance and wedging wide a high arched skylight stair beyond. This high light underscores the nature of the plan – generously open to light but constrained by an arrangement of rooms as alcoves, to be revealed only by moving through the beckoning spaces. Other fragments abound, like the cornice bracket dropped below the piano stair landing, to support it; the stair rail musical score baluster; the low ceiling under the tower entry, inside and out. The front room itself soars to almost 20 feet, as does a vast over-scaled fireplace, yet the contrasts of size support a mood of permanence and control the architectural assembly even as the sunlight itself flood the room in ever changing dynamics.

10 “Choo-Choo” Cottages

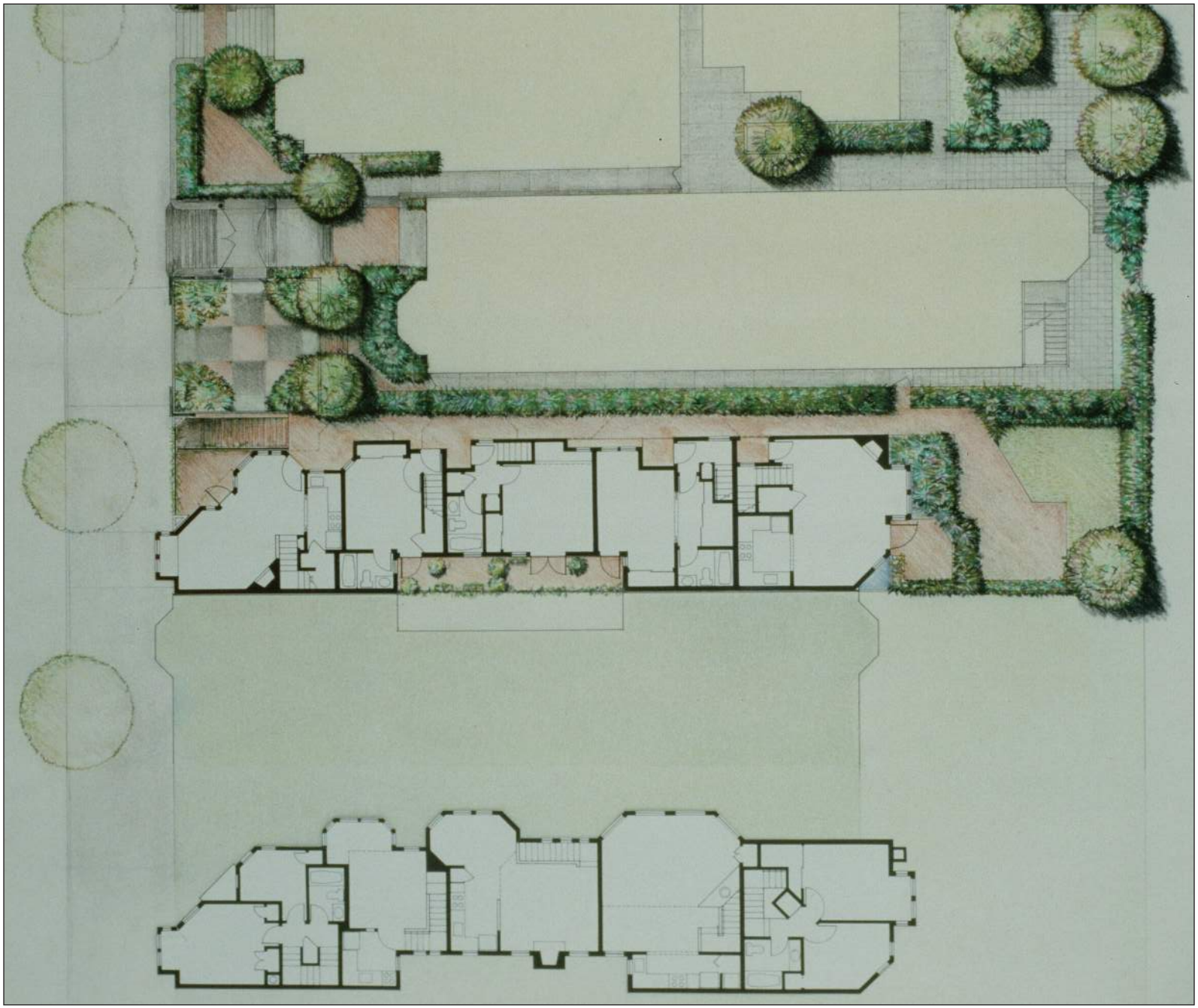
Our site was a rather standard 25’ by 137.5’ San Francisco city lot owned by a couple who also own the adjacent Nineteenth Century Italianate house, since converted to several apartments. Our response was to synthesize a less-grand building type of the past, the workman’s dwelling, to create a linked row of cottages. Turned sideways on the lot and stepping back along the narrow site, the units also relate to similar older buildings scattered about the city.

The cottages are anchored to the streetscape by a base containing a subterranean auto garage, expressed as a polite wall defensive of privacy but pierced for a casual street glimpse and to spill splatters of sunlight onto the stairs behind. The entry niche is ornamented with a mosaic tile mural, made by Frances Butler, from scraps of interior kitchen and bath tiles.

The front and rear units are conventionally two-storied units, with sleeping rooms above living areas. The three center units reverse the pattern, so the loft-like high ceiling living quarters reach for additional light and grandeur. Every unit has its own exterior entrance along a path treated as a linear garden. The building mass steps up from the street, one unit rising behind the other; the rear units reverse the steps down towards a rear garden; each unit thus gains an individual outlook.

10 “Choo-Choo” Cottages

Fragments from past building types used to suggest individuality for units include unornamented Queen Anne form (Mary Ann, as Frank Lloyd Wright used to say), and Bay Region shingle style, as well as a miniature Italianate-type block, Craftsman cement plaster, and playful details such as a blind window and well-mannered keystone vousoirs. The front unit and wall are light-colored above and dark below, to acknowledge adjacent buildings. The shingles of the second unit are aged with stain. The rest of the units are united by garden green paints along the path and at the rear.



10 “Choo-Choo” Cottages

Since no single unit is wider than 21 feet, light and air come in from all sides, eliminating the usual dark hallways, entries, and stairs. Some of the center units offer ceiling heights of 20 feet, partly due to an obscure Planning Code requirement for at least one window in each unit to face a street or yard, partly to make the units seem much larger, and partly because the units would then more resemble the aspirations of the artist loft dwelling, literally supplying additional levels of architectural meaning. The resulting animated form resembles several smaller separate buildings in a row, like a parked train, and is also a terrific modern companion to its older, larger, and more ornate neighbors. It replaced ornamental imagery largely by an enthusiasm of scale, color, detail, and formal disposition. The “Choo Choo” Cottages received an AIA award, but without much mention of architectural imagery, including smokestacks.

C2 | Sunday, March 7, 2010 | SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND SFGATE.COM

BAY AREA

CITYSCAPE By John King

Upscale area, flavorful twist

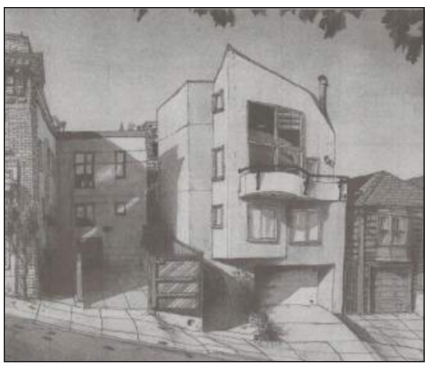
Here's another example of how cities are enriched by well-done exceptions to the rule. Instead of lining up along the street, these five cottage-like condominiums telescope deep into a settled block of Pacific Heights, adding depth to what otherwise would be a static urban scene. The jolt is enhanced by a rare local example of true postmodern design -- nodding to past architectural styles, but with sly humor in the colors and forms. Much "PoMo" now looks dated and glib; this slice stays relevant by emphasizing craft, not kitsch.

2910 California St.

Architect: Kotas/Pantaleoni Architects | Style: Postmodern | Size: 3 stories | Date built: 1989

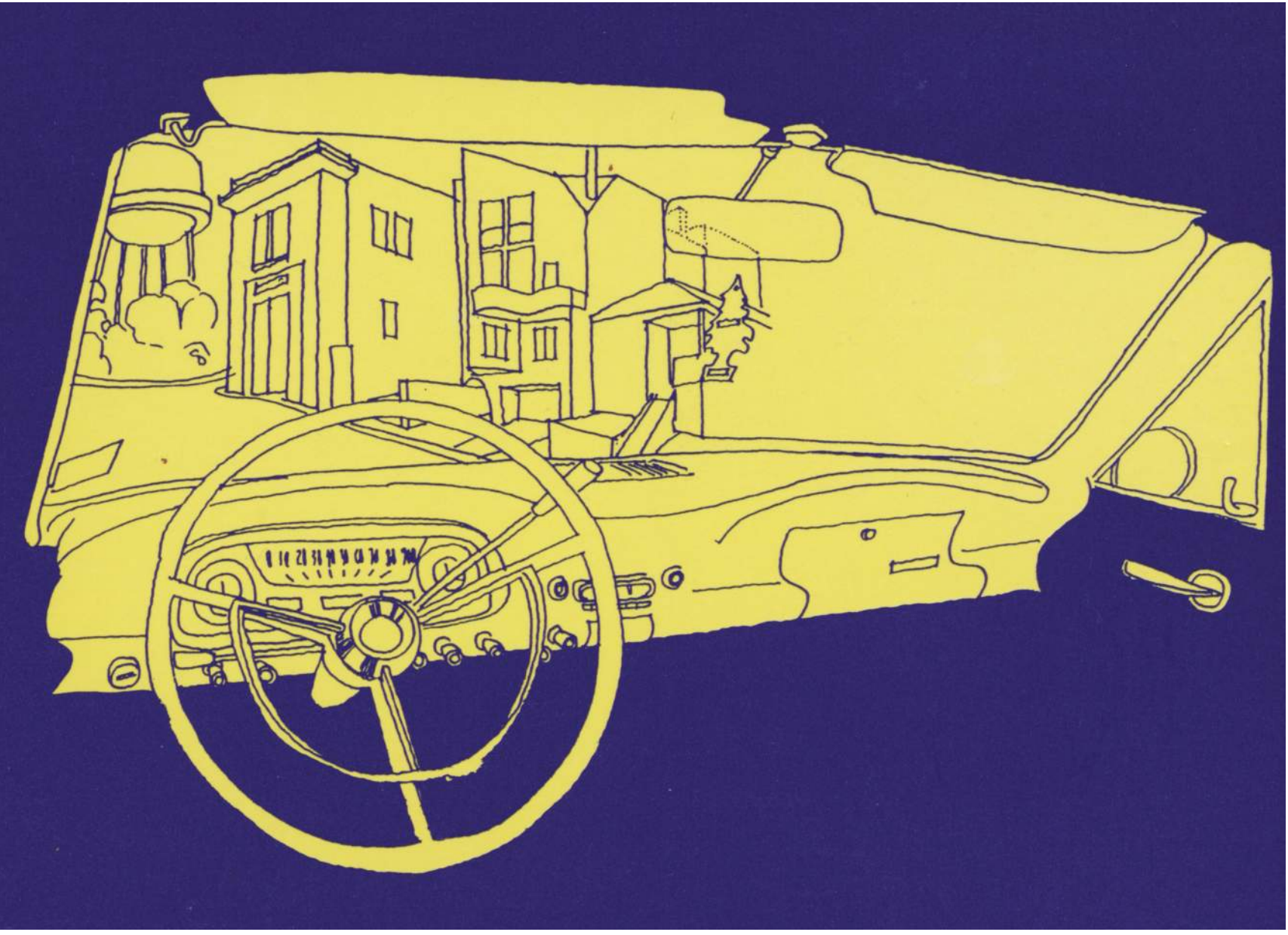
Cityscape is a weekly look at a slice of San Francisco. Suggest future stops to jking@sfchronicle.com

11 Wisconsin Street

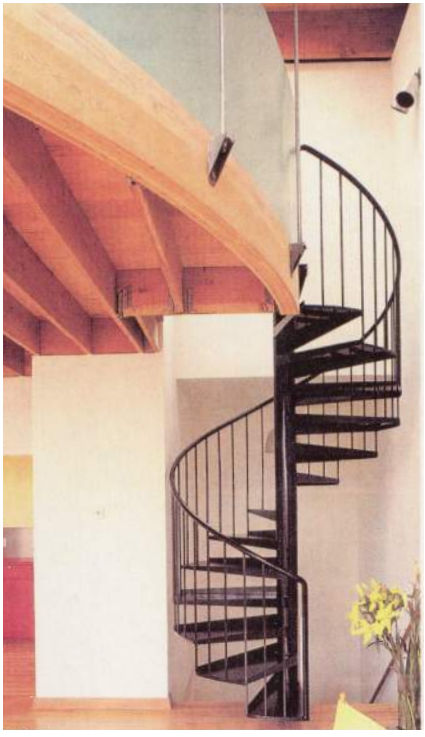


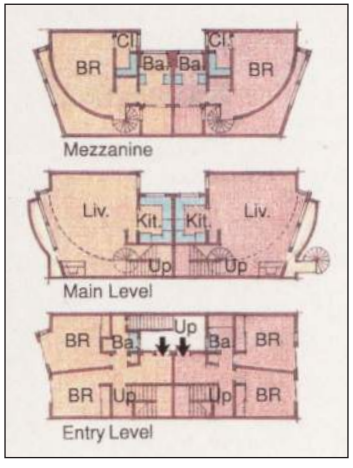
This is a new prototype of the two-unit building indigenous to San Francisco. Unlike horizontally layered buildings (“flats” atop one another), our archetype is sharply uplifted, from layer cake to bookends, forming two houses of enormous privacy and remarkable character. The front house overlooks the street, the downtown skyline and the bay and hills beyond, while the mirror-image plan rear house dwells upon a private garden and framed vistas of the city. We succeeded in providing townhouses that live much like any row house but are vastly more open than most. The mild industrial character of each house has been developed as that of a loft space, or, as the real estate ads put it, “low tech”.

The vertical way of life is an idealized terrain which mimics the hills of San Francisco. Entering the building is entering the city street grid, and each house’s stairs ascend the cliffs and hilltops like the streets themselves, to offer views and insight at every twist and from every level. The plan unfolds from basement to one- to two-story spaces, and further underscores the feeling of exhilaration and expansion which accompanies hillside ascents.



11 Wisconsin Street





Row buildings of San Francisco are boxes of horizontal space modified by attachments: bays, porticos, balconies, cornices. These twins are two small houses united by a larger idea, and the vertical econoboxes are sliced, rotated, and punctured to develop the idealized interior landscape and its relationship to the out-of-doors. Animation of the interior terrain is by floods of light (interior darkness can be a key drawback of row buildings) from courts, skylights, and enormous windows, which also offer splendid views and serve to alter the building's scale. Distinguishing each unit, individual cloaks of rustic shingles and urbane stucco for garden and street side houses, respectively, tailor the twins to their sites. A mezzanine bedroom is slung from roof rafters of each townhouse just as the Bay Bridge, visible from the front house, is supported by cables.

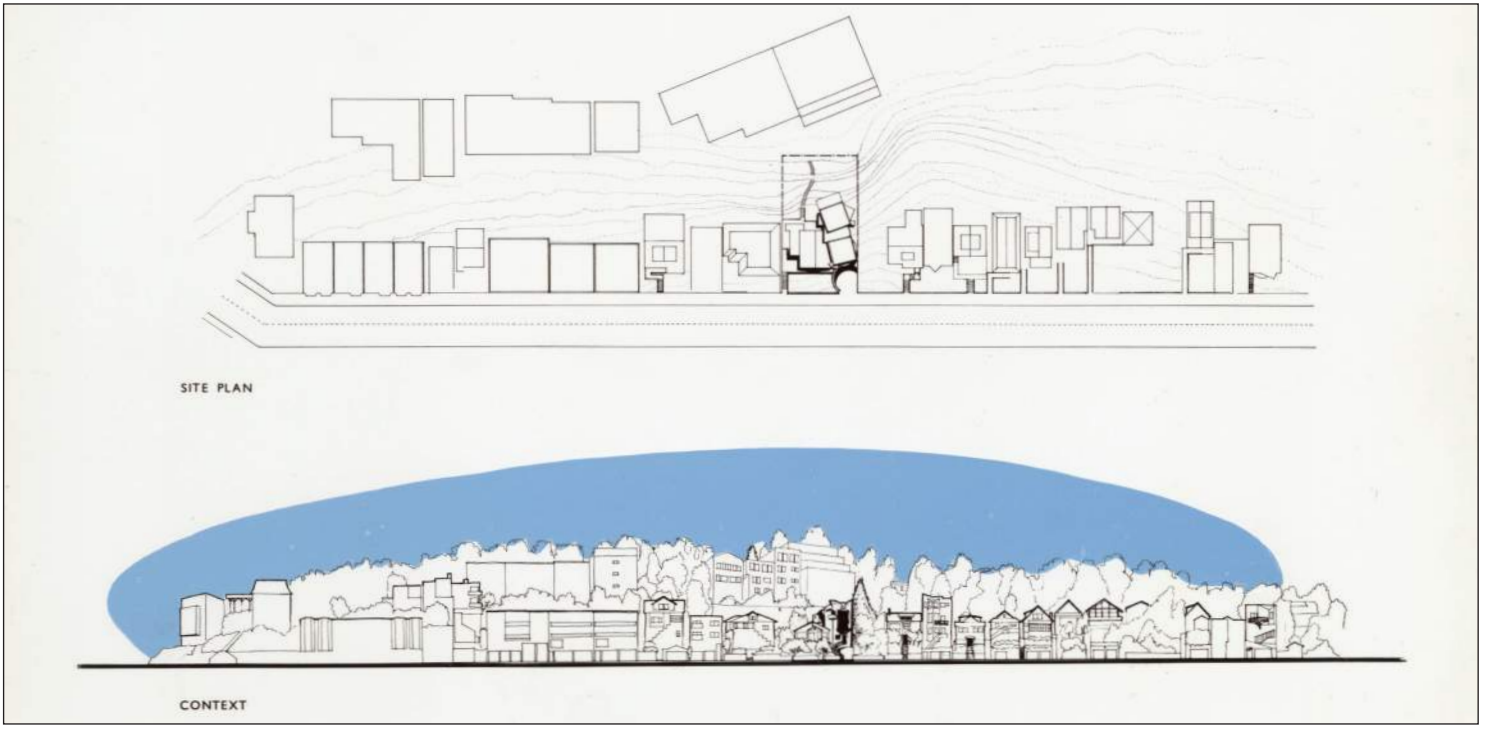
12 Owl House *(aka Torre San Gimigniano)*

This small house for two professionals is to be built on a hillside seemingly remote from the city below. The design participates in the local architectural tradition by once again syncretically transforming it. The steep site, for instance, encouraged a split of a typical rowhouse box into two towers interlocked horizontally to a swelling 3-story atrium that expands vertically along a sloped and rising sidewall. The towers open internally to provide constant views of the city beyond and of a wilderness garden behind. Thus internal passage through the house, from tower to tower, back and forth and up, presents the house as a stairwell space whose sequence of events occur at landings, platforms or steps pulled free of the continuous rising and spiraling motion. Externally, the front tower leads the eye up the hill, enriching the streetscape by entanglement with the angled buildings above. The towers themselves twist gently in placement to acknowledge this collision of angles, and allow the widest range of play of scale and allusive meaning.

12 Owl House *(aka Torre San Gimigniano)*

The format of the 19th Century San Francisco rowhouse is further extended in formal, figurative, and thematic aspects by surprising adaptations. Clear references to the earlier Bay Area Tradition – enormous windows for light, views, and manipulation of scale, carefully sculpted internal spaces, washes of unexpected light, remnants of Western shacks, Georgian ornament, and modern materials – are integrated into something new.

The key to this integration requires movement through the house. Entrance begins in a dark wood-paneled low hall, along a guest room and bath, and proceeds up to the bottom of the light-filled stair-crossed atrium. From there a sweep stair leads up to the grand parlor and its incredible views. From here, five broad shelf-like steps swing back to the dining room. A corner is sliced for views of the garden, yet the room remains open through the parlor to the city beyond. Another stair rises forward along the angled wall to a mezzanine library, which pierces the house towards the view. The final ramp bridges back and up to bedroom, culminating the voyage under the liberating explosion of the atrium roof dissolved into infinite light where, concealed by screens and partitions, even the bedroom walls seem to disappear.



«Bay Area Tradition»

Peuvent se réclamer de la *Bay Area Tradition* : B. Maybeck, W. Polk, E. Coxhead et J. Morgan en 1890-1910 ; W. Wurster, J. Esherick et G. Dailey dans les années 1930-1950 ; Ch. Moore, W. Turnbull et C. W. Callister au cours de la période 1960-1980 ; enfin D. Solomon, le groupe Ace et J. Kotas de nos jours.

ers 1900, de jeunes architectes reprennent à leur compte les
éaux du *Shingle Style* de la côte Est et du mouvement *Arts and*
rafts anglais : ils en interprètent librement les formes pour édifier
es maisons de taille modeste, donnant naissance à la *Bay Area*
adition («tradition de la région de la Baie»). Cette dernière se
stingue par la simplicité du plan des maisons, l'adoption
u séquoia comme matériau principal, l'emploi
motifs décoratifs locaux auxquels
nt juxtaposés des éléments
assiques ou gothiques, et le mélange
élibéré d'échelles diverses dans
rnementation, les volumes
térieurs et les espaces
térieurs.

Sea Ranch
Ce lotissement résidentiel de 2500 ha fut conçu en 1964 par Ch. Moore d'après une étude urbanistique de Lawrence Halprin.

Il s'élève sur un terrain côtier, au nord de San Francisco, déboisé au XIXe siècle.

Des contraintes architecturales très strictes – utilisation du bois de séquoia comme matériau principal, entre autres – ont été imposées afin de préserver le caractère sauvage du site. Pour éviter la monotonie des lotissements classiques, on a créé de petits îlots résidentiels. Le Condominium I se compose ainsi de dix logements, dont les volumes et le revêtement de planches verticales rappellent ceux des granges des environs.

Technique du «shingle»
La *balloon frame* est recouverte de papier goudronné, puis de rangées de lattes sur lesquelles sont cloués les shingles (bardeaux de séquoia plus ou moins longs) ou des planches à recouvrement.

Goslinsky House
233 Pacific Avenue, 1902)
Maybeck a su tirer parti
de l'étroitesse du terrain,
ur donner à cette maison
ne volumétrie originale.
La haute fenêtre étroite
le l'avant-corps présente
un décor néo-gothique.

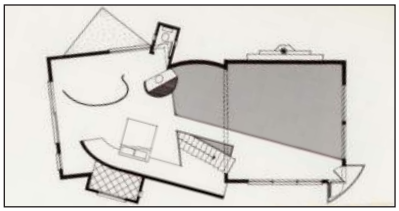
Un espace ouvert
Les toits les plus pentus abritent les vastes volumes des salles de séjour. Charles Moore et son équipe ont conçu un espace ouvert, éclairé par de grandes baies vitrées, qui traduit bien l'esprit de la *Bay Area Tradition*. Celle-ci s'adresse avant tout à une bourgeoisie aisée cherchant un mode de vie sain et décontracté.

Gregory-Ingraham House
(140 Laidley St)
Le plan, les proportions et l'élévation de cette maison conçue par Shaffer et Kotas en 1989 témoignent d'une libre interprétation des conventions architecturales des *row houses*.

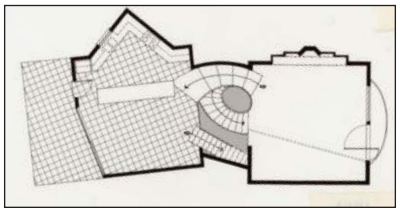
ıvsur House
232 Pacific Avenue, 1902)
shead a joué ici sur le contraste entre
revêtement «rustique» en bardeaux et des motifs
spiration classique : fenêtre palladienne, fronton
ulaire et consoles couronnant la porte d'entrée.

12

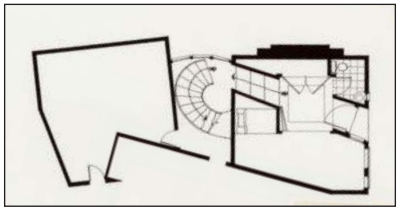
Owl House *(aka Torre San Gimigniano)*



Top Floor ~ Bedroom/Mezzanine



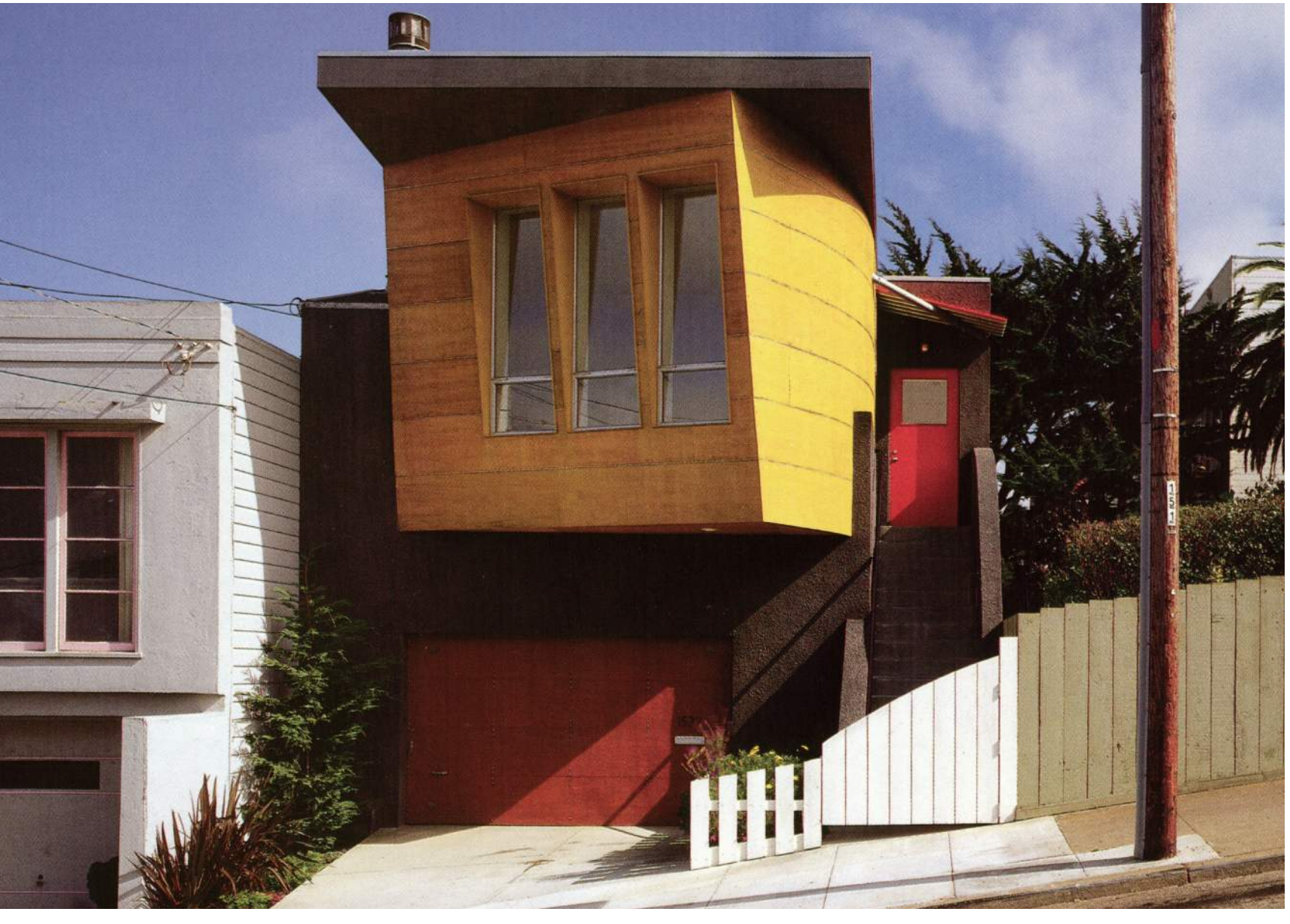
Middle Floor ~ Kitchen/Living



Bottom Floor ~ Storage/Guest

A single continuous handrail unites these rising journeys into a seamless flow. The spatial voyage, from dark, low and small, toward ever lighter, higher, more expansive limits, is echoed metaphorically as a trip through time, from past to present and into the future.

Oversized redwood "long John" shingles cloak the front tower, to gentle the scale and to delineate it from the redwood plywood of the rear tower. A standard height angle-folded French door at the puncture of the mezzanine through the façade underscores the huge size of the double double-hung windows. The atrium curve is clad in unbroken sheets of lustrous aluminum; the slope wall is smooth dark plywood. The vault intersections of the parlor ceiling are only partially hung with plaster, kept free of the walls except at the corners, to reveal the joists of the roof and lightly suggest the perfection of a dome. Under its shelter, the many dichotomies of gesture, theme and meaning – the noble and the vernacular, the kinetic and the static, the urban and the wild, large and small, light and dark, aspiration and attainment – are resolved in a purposeful suspension, floating above the city at the end of the world.



13 House of Faith

We were asked to design a modern row house on a standard 100 x 25 foot lot, sliced off our client's mother's garden. The house was to be small, like its mostly 50s neighbors but more spacious, open, and bright instead of a dark collection of separate little rooms. But while requesting openness to sun (and views), our client also insisted on as much privacy as possible. We would find that views of San Francisco Bay could be achieved obliquely, down hill thirty miles to the south, and views of downtown five miles to the north. Indeed, the three street front windows, inset and framed akin to nearby builder's period work, focus on a post card view of San Francisco skyscrapers, like a distant vision of Oz, especially after dark.

BAY AREA

CITYSCAPE *By John King*

Shots of color in a settled scene

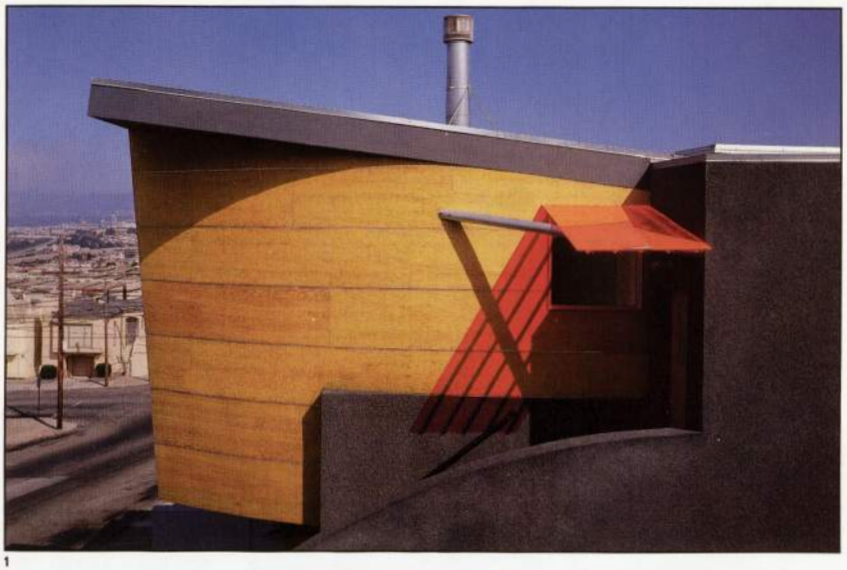
In residential districts built piecemeal rather than as subdivisions, the highlight can be the piece that doesn't quite fit in. This home added decades after most of its neighbors is a cheerful provocation as it cranes its lone bay toward watery views, celebrating the movement with vivid color and a curvy twist. It's a startling sight to come upon — but the scale is as neighborly as can be, each quirk a logical extension of the kit of parts on blocks like this. This is contextual design at its idiosyncratic best, putting to use what others might scorn.

1539 Felton St. | Architect: Kotas/Pantaleoni | Style: Postmodern| Size: 1 story| Date built: 1992

Cityscape is a weekly look at a slice of San Francisco. Coming up: a month of public spaces. Any nominations? Send them to jking@sfchronicle.com.

The Rowhouse Realigned

Eye-popping finishes and low-rent materials break with Bay Area rowhouse convention in this residence by Kotas/Pantaleoni Architects.



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Appearances to the contrary, nearly everything about this San Francisco rowhouse is typical of houses in the city's outer neighborhoods. Standing two stories high on a 25′ × 100′ lot with a minimal front lawn, it has a bay projecting from the second floor above the street-level garage and a back yard large enough for a garden. But beyond these conventions, architects Jeremy Kotas and Joanne Koch of Kotas/Pantaleoni Architects have abandoned the characteristics of typical Bay Area residences. The front bay is pulled out and cranked eastward toward the view as are the dining area and back porch. The warped plan of this basically rectangular building is revealed inside with two walls on the upper level curving outward from the hallway in the middle of the house; the living and dining rooms are thus visually enlarged. The only house for blocks that breaks rank with the boxes along the streets, it is also the only one that makes the most of its hillside location.

The architects are known for their quirky and colorful houses. In fact, the client chose them partly because they use bright colors as a substitute for costly materials. At first, the architects wanted this to be a natural house with redwood plywood on the canted elements and a natural concrete tone for the other walls, stuccoed in a pebbled texture. When the client found the untreated cement to be too blah, the walls were dyed blue-gray and were enriched with maroon-colored pebbles. When the redwood proved to be scarce and expensive, they turned to less costly cedar plywood and stained it yellow to complement the concrete walls. Accents in fluorescent pink-orange appear in the plastic front-porch roof and the nylon sail that screens the back porch.

Although the architects abandoned their idea of using materials in their most natural state, nature will prevail in the long run: as the yellow dye fades, the cedar plywood will become silvery-gray and rain will gradually wash away the dark finish of the maroon pebbles. In the future, when the base of the house becomes warmer and the top cooler, nature will have produced the kind of harmony that the designers originally envisioned. It will become more subdued, allowing the house to fit in, while providing the best view on the block.

Sally Woodbridge ■

The author is P/A's San Francisco correspondent.

13 House of Faith

Since the site sloped sideways, we were able to angle the ends of the upper floor to capture these astounding distant views yet prevent passersby or neighbors from peering into this private realm. The two end rooms, for relaxation and dining, were united by a ten-foot wide entryway corridor illuminated by huge skylights cross lighting these main rooms. Entering the house is to arrive in a Mediterranean world of sunlight, blue sky, and curved white walls.

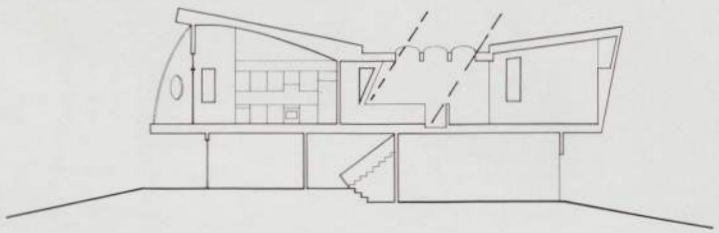
Innovation of plan is echoed in material choices. Integrally colored cement plaster to clad the lower floor and exposed property-line wall in blue-grey; this masonry base sprouts the upper angled and overhanging yellow-stained cedar covered main rooms, like a couple of big wooden baskets lodged on a rock pile. Maple flooring is used continuously throughout, and a Portland cement plaster, with a tinted sealer for lustrous surfaces on curved and straight walls alike. Synthetic marbleized “Syn-Mar” is used in a bathroom shower, but instead of a beige or false marble pattern, solid vivid color is used. (We were amazed, the day we revealed a color scheme we’d arranged for bathroom surfaces, to be shown an identical set of colors Faith had wanted to choose – turquoise, orchid, and gloss black.)

4

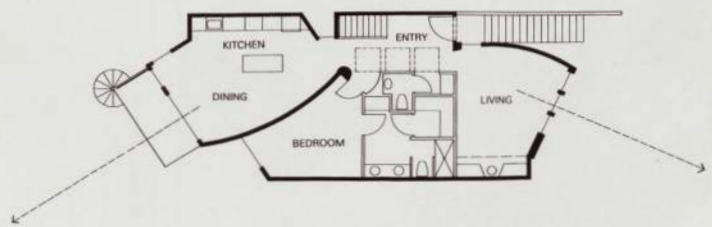
5

From the entrance, the serpentine plan makes a simple program visually complex (5). The floor-to-ceiling windows link the living room to the city; the recessed fireplace shaft helps to maintain an intimate scale within (4).

Project: *Faith's House, San Francisco.*
Architects: *Kotas/Pantaleoni Architects, San Francisco (Jeremy Kotas, Anthony Pantaleoni, principals-in-charge; Joanne Koch, project manager; Bob Collins, Diana Woodbridge, Alice Soohoo, Ellen Rush, design team; David Louie, models and renderings).*
Client: *Faith Gohstand.*
Site: *25' × 100' lot sloping east.*
Program: *2415-sq-ft house with two bedrooms and a studio.*
Structural system: *wood frame.*
Major materials: *integrally-colored heavy dash-textured stucco with maroon gravel; resawn cedar plain-face plywood with yellow aniline dye; fluorescent plexiglass; plaster (see Building Materials, p. 131).*
Mechanical system: *natural gas-fired, forced-air furnace.*
Consultants: *John Dempcy, landscape; Werner Martin, structural; John Britton, BEC Associates, Title 24 (Energy Compliance Report.)*
General contractor: *C.O.D. Construction (Neil Cotter, John O'Donoghue).*
Cost: *$250,000.*
Photos: *Richard Barnes.*



SECTION



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

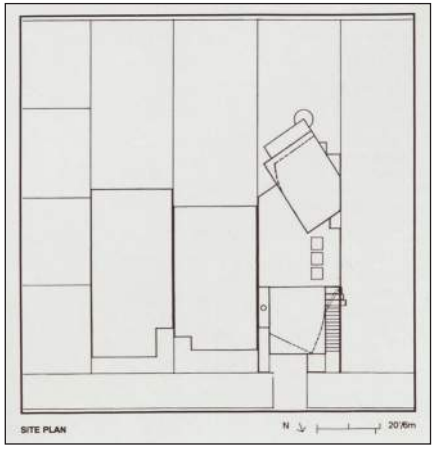
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

N ← 10'/3m

13 House of Faith

The simple bar kitchen, the cabinets of which are cheap olive-stained plywood, includes a floating island worktop cabinet set on wheels for easy repositioning as required. A steel spiral stair at the rear connects the garden to the deck and dining area above. Two panels of flame-neon Plexiglas, one at each end of the house, punctuate the compositions and provide shelter at the front and privacy at the rear.

This row house is twenty-five feet wide and feels forty miles long, given its outlook. It observes the orthographic conventions of an urban type, but displays an equal yearning for individual flights of fancy. It embodies a syncretism of order and exhilaration. Above all, it reaches beyond polite parameters, without chaotic result, but in fact renews and extends row house conventions by pointed commentary.



14 Sand Castle

It might be hard to find a better example of a syncretic approach to architectural design than the accretive house called the Sand Castle, as named by neighborhood kids. This obvious nickname stems from the super coarse aggregate of the cement plaster skin, on which some of the gravel-sized stones were hand applied to the wet cement. Much of the leitmotif of the house arose from a desire to include a Gaudiesque imprint, of importance to the owners. They also insisted on a whimsical approach, but to include “no triangles”.

The original cottage on the site, c 1920, could not, by a temporary Planning Commission moratorium, be demolished when the current building was designed. So it was lifted 2 stories, allowing new work below - an entry/service level, a collection of sleeping and bath rooms on a second level – and was reworked and expanded into a living level of dining room, octagonal parlor, music room, kitchen, and a later addition family/garden room. The attic of the cottage was converted to a study riding the lower levels like a hidden howdah. A garage, tapered along the entry stairs, provides a grand invitation to ascend, was also a later addition in the spirit of the house above.

House Proud | Elaine Louie

A castle lacking only a magic wand.

SAN FRANCISCO

CHILDREN on Laidley Street call No. 134 — a four-story stucco house with a turret, an amphitheater and a grotto — the Sand Castle.

Brian Brosnahan, a lawyer; his wife, Laurie Barkin, a psychiatric nurse, and their children call it home.

The house — originally a two-story cottage built in 1906 after the earthquake of that year — is an example of over-scale whimsical architecture, the kind normally reserved for fun houses, movie sets and Disneyland.

The couple asked Skip Shaffer, a friend and designer who lives across the street, to turn their 800-square-foot white clapboard cottage into a 2,200-square-foot castle in the sky.

The house also had to function.

"We wanted a working house: a German shepherd, not an Afghan," said Mr. Brosnahan, 36. There had to be four bedrooms, an eat-in kitchen, a living room with a fireplace, balconies and an abundance of natural light. There also had to be three full bathrooms and two half-baths.

And there had to be looniness.

"We wanted it to be child-friendly," said Ms. Barkin, 39. It was to be an urban fun house, a place where imagination could run slightly amok, where children could be knights and dragons, without hurting themselves. A place where children could be children, and so could adults.

Nowadays, when Mr. Brosnahan looks through the giant keyhole window at the top of the staircase on the third floor, he's not just looking at a dazzling city view. "I am *spying* on the city from a keyhole," he said.

In fairy tales, castles spring up from the mist. Not on Laidley Street. The transformation — still in the works — has taken more than four years and $524,000 ($124,000 to buy the house, and $400,000 to renovate it). The family, which now includes Corianne, 5, Daniel, 2, and Benjamin, 4 months, moved in in 1986. The work is about a year from completion.

Ms. Barkin fell in love with the house, nestled high on a hill in the Noe Valley section, while jogging on Laidley Street in 1985. The next year, she and her husband bought it and moved in. In 1989, they hired Mr. Shaffer.

Laurie Barkin, Brian Brosnahan and their children at their castlelike home.

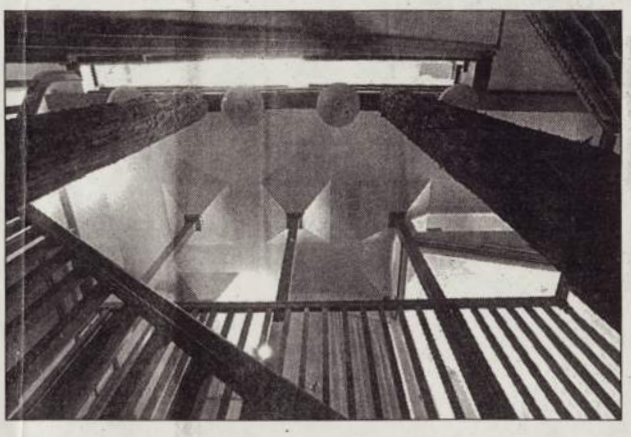
They were outgrowing the house.

Early on, Mr. Shaffer moved the original Edwardian-style wood-frame cottage 11 feet up the hillside at a cost of $8,000. It sat perched on railroad ties while a new foundation and frame were built beneath it. The old house became the fourth floor and part of the third, while the new stucco castle became the two bottom floors and part of the third.

"The old house could not have supported a new house," Mr. Brosnahan said. "In San Francisco, it's very common to jack houses up and build new ones beneath."

The house is a hybrid of architectural styles. "The front of the house looks like a war mask, a Mycenaean citadel," Mr. Shaffer said. "There's Spanish colonial in the arched door and the scalloped top of the facade, and the old house is Edwardian."

At night, there is a mysterious warm, golden glow in the niche to the right of the arched front door — its source, a light bulb, hidden beneath an onyx shelf. In the foyer is a grotto lighted by both a shell-shaped sconce and the third-floor skylight. To the right of the foyer is a workroom.



Redwood posts climb to the third floor, above. The living room windows, left, are alternately fogbound or filled with sweeping views of San Francisco.

Photographs by Terrence McCarthy for The New York Times

From the mosaic floor sprout two redwood posts. Climbing through open space, they rise 19 feet to the third floor, framing the stairwell. Because the posts still bear their bark and seem alive, the house seems to be growing. To someone with a fervid imagination, going up the stairs is like scaling a beanstalk.

On the second floor, the three children sleep in one bedroom. (Two more bedrooms are on that floor; another is in the fourth-floor attic.)

On the second floor are two seating nooks of redwood and oak. The children use them as urban mud rooms, where they can drop off backpacks, jackets and galoshes. Ms. Barkin wants to turn one of them into a reading alcove, with a curtain for privacy and a shelf for books.

The third floor, the sunniest, is where the eat-in kitchen, a study and the living room are.

At the top of the stairs on the third floor is the oversize keyhole window, 3 feet high and 15 inches wide. Peering through it can make one feel like a tiny Alice in Wonderland. Proportion is also out of kilter on the third-floor balcony, where three giant terra-cotta planters sit, each filled with a spicy, fragrant mix of rosemary and red-orange geraniums. The pots, which fit snugly into the steel railing, are an example of function posing as decoration. "The over-scale pots keep the children safe," Mr. Shaffer said: they help keep the youngsters from tumbling over the edge.

From the balconies, Mr. Brosnahan said he could fantasize about being somewhere other than in San Francisco. Sometimes he imagines he is in a fortress. "We could fill the planters with hot oil and pour them over the balcony when people attack," he said. At other times, when clouds whip by and blanket the city in a thick fog, he imagines himself in the Swiss Alps.

Even the back-yard garden is a provocative landscape for the imagination. There are camellias, rhododendrons, calla lilies and two birches. Mr. Shaffer laid out stones in the garden in a semicircle to create an amphitheater, cut down a sequoia in a neighbor's back yard that was about to fall down and carved out two seats and an ottoman from the wood. The purpose was, of course, romantic: the furniture was designed for stargazing.

Specs

TURNING a cottage into a castle on an urban residential street is not easy. It takes money — and diplomacy.

"Most of the neighborhood is pretty tolerant," said Skip Shaffer, who with Jeremy Kotas, a San Francisco architect, had already designed two houses on the street, one with a front resembling a face. "But four women on the block didn't like us."

To persuade neighbors that the Brosnahan-Barkin house would be a humorous delight and not an eyesore, Mr. Shaffer embarked on a campaign in 1990. "We sent out petitions to 500 to 600 people announcing we were building the house, as required by the city," he said. "I did models. I did fancy drawings. There were hearings with the city's planning commission." The models, drawings and petitions cost $10,000.

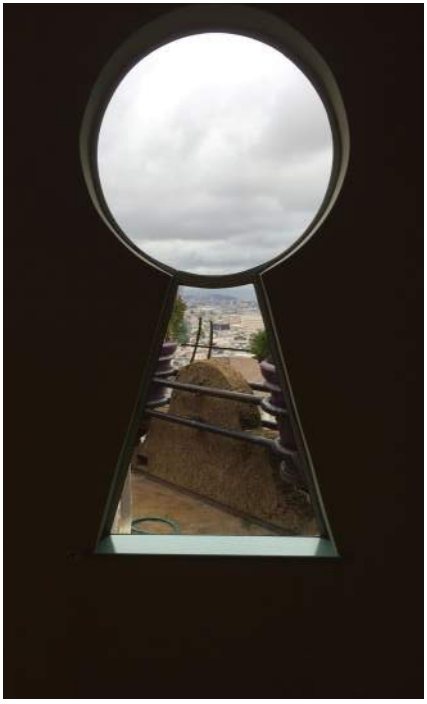
Mr. Shaffer also invited any passer-by who gawked, gasped or stared at the house to visit the job site and look around. "I'd wave them in and say, 'Oh, come on up,' " he said.

Although the house looks like no other on the block, Mr. Shaffer gave it the same scale as the others. And he made sure that the materials blended with those of neighbors' houses. The wood frame of the original part of the house is next to a wooden house on the right. And the stucco castle that now dominates the left side is next door to a house also made of stucco.

So the trick to designing a nontraditional house is to include the neighbors in the process, he said. "I talk to my neighbors, constantly," he added, "and they talk to me, constantly."

The Sand Castle, with its combination of old and new.

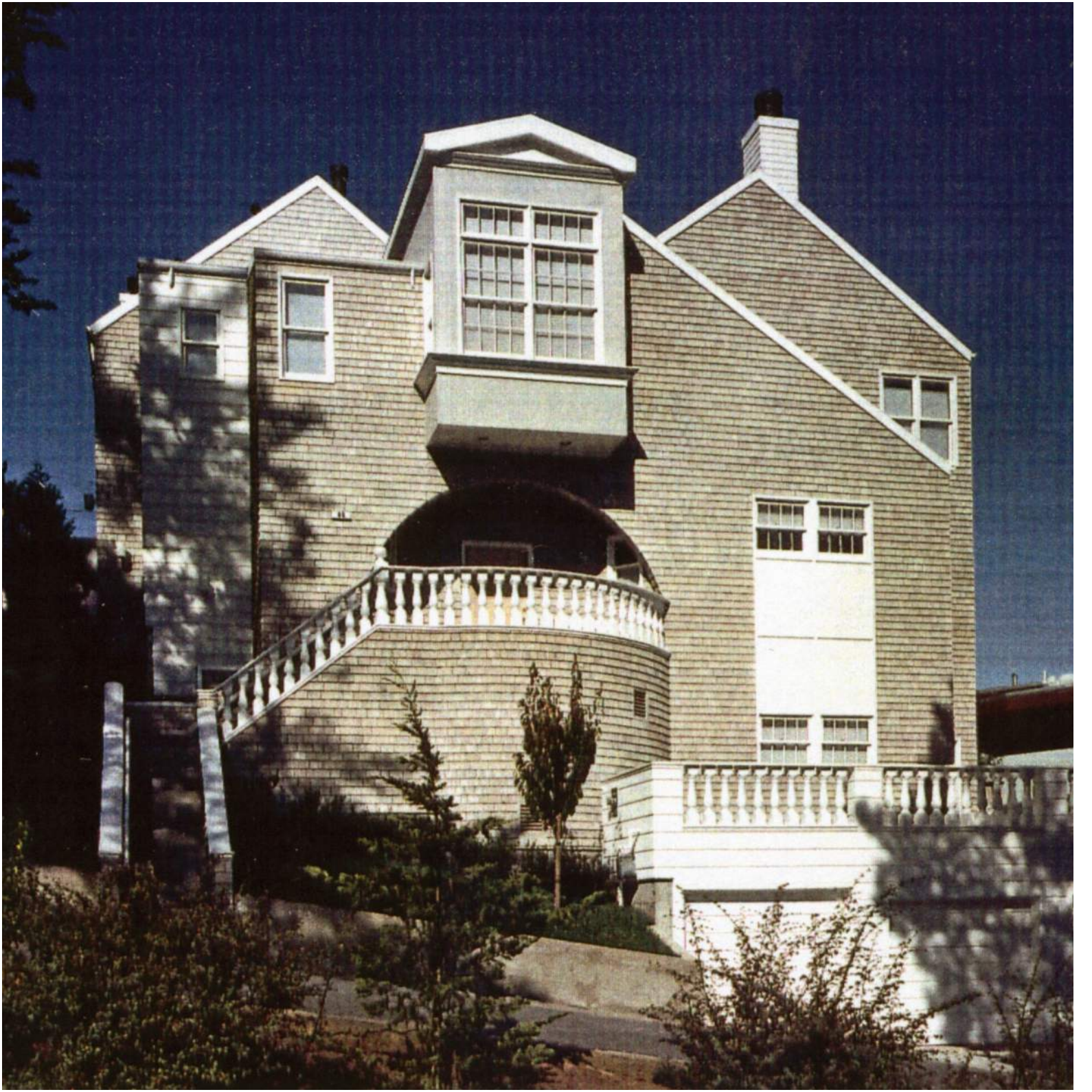
14 Sand Castle



A partial arch at the top of the stairs carves a cave for protected entry into the battered and defensive walls. Entering through an inset massive door is akin to exiting into a twilight-illuminated grove, where a pair of redwood tree trunks flank a delicate stairway up to the source of the filtered light. The entry paving of broken tiles adds the color of a forest floor. Up the stairs gains a glimpse of domesticity: antique light fixtures; alcoves for seating, study, storage; bits of Art Nouveau (Morris) wall papers; various paint color schemes; and a ceiling sky mural. There seem a large number of rooms for such a relatively small castle, but the main upper floor rooms are interlocked by multiple doorways, and lighted by unexpected windows. The vertical journey is capped by an enlarged key-hole shaped window, an Alice-in-Wonderland device framing and focusing attention on an encompassing view of San Francisco, its bay, and the hills beyond.

14 Sand Castle

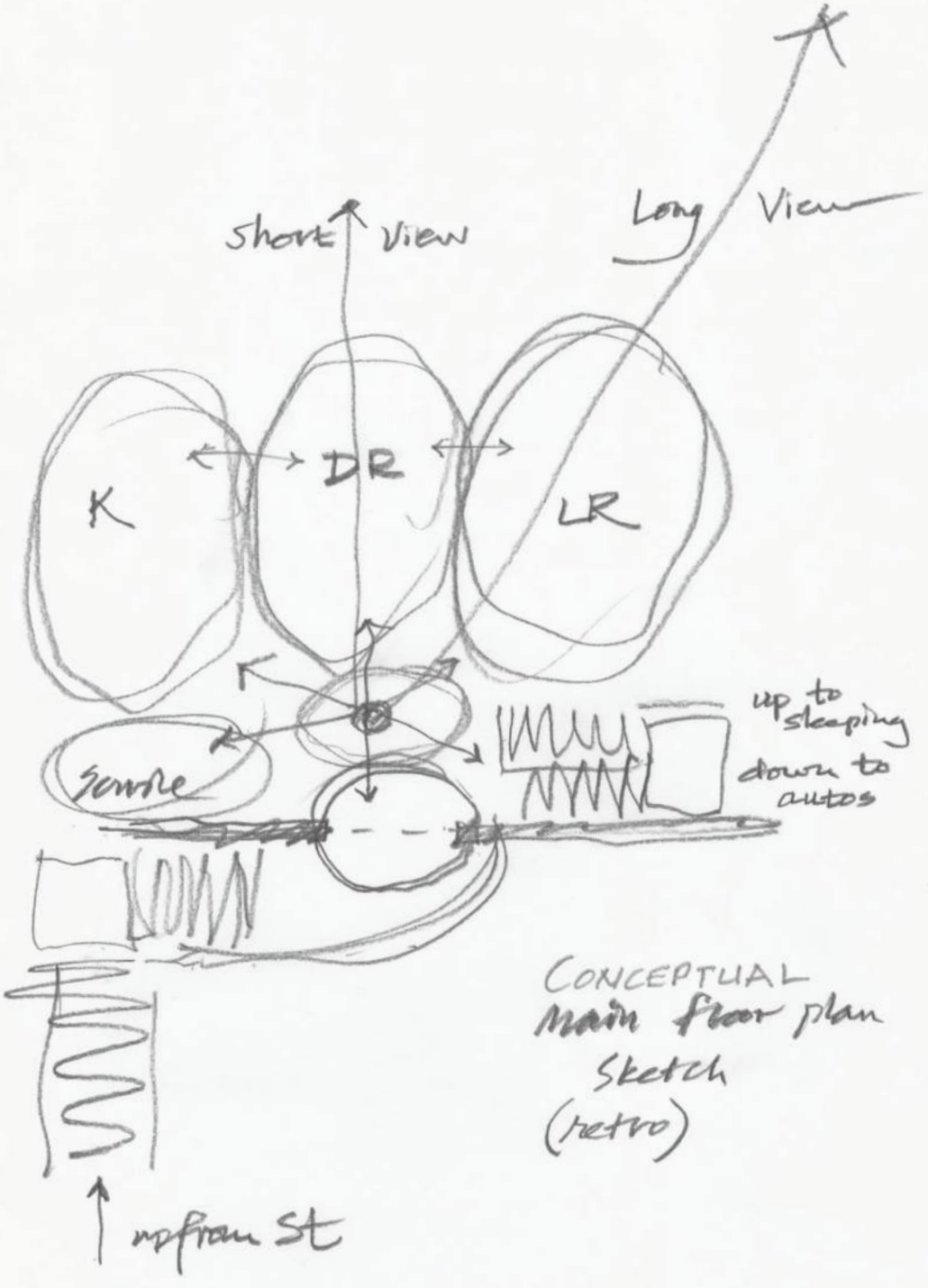
A French door at the key-hole window opens to a balcony next to a wood-framed delineation of the octagonal parlor bay. Ornamental steel work was designed for railings, to contain planters, and for exhibition, especially at the roof line above. Not quite a tower, the octagon terminates in a corona of gilded eggs, created by the owner, exploding around a baroquely scalloped parapet edge, as futuristic and fertile a gesture as a rocket ship launch, and symbolic of the kinetics of both time and space as well as movement through the house itself.



15 Mendosa (Wen) House

This new house was originally conceived and designed as a direct extension of the oldest Bay Area Tradition in Architecture. Those houses from the turn of the 19th Century designed by Ernest Coxhead, Bernard Maybeck, Willis Polk and others, often employed the rustic language of shingles on vernacular forms with classical details. Their imagery, with a large size, informal but carefully designed plan, and precise arrangement of parts, allowed these buildings to emphasize authority over their sites. As a commentary on these earlier houses, the Mendosa house dominates its site like an enormous wooden boulder, with the extra thrust of splayed twin gables. A great arch hovers above the entrance, suggesting both shelter and permanence.

The relatively small street façade windows are combined with other material and form manipulations to increase the percentage of wall as opposed to window, and enhance the perceived scale of the building. Entry into an arcaded and partially octagonal hall reveals the diagonal placement of rooms, for light, distant view, and relative relationships among them. A glimpse from this hall crosses a living room, but the dining room remains more private.



CONCEPTUAL
main floor plan
Sketch
(retro)

15 Mendosa (Wen) House

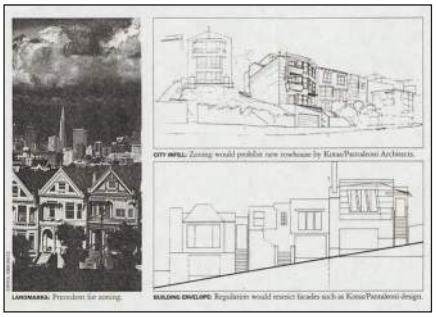
Upstairs are individual family accomodations, and below are recreation and guest areas just above a street-level garage.

The public façade of this house offers an explosion of forms, but the rooms of the house are only hinted at by the pediment peaks behind the assorted diagonals, indents, impanelation, scattered small windows, and a large glazed bay. Most of these elements compose sets of stairs, halls, service, utility, closet and similar uses. The bay alone is a place to pause atop the entry arch.

(From “architectural notes for Oliver Wen: Our original presentation of this design to the neighborhood received a later comment that it need be larger, so as not to depress property values. No other project in my life ever received such a comment!”)

16 Church Street

A rather complicated plan allowed two multi-level dwelling units to be folded into an allowable envelope, which was set back to align with an adjacent building, at the owner's request. An exaggerated bay front, and a resulting play of sharp angles, identifies the form of the building. The rear of the building narrows to avoid shadowing other yards. And outdoor open space is generous: a rear yard, two balconies, and a garage-top deck. A Wrightian balcony rail treatment helps elevate an otherwise somewhat conventional San Francisco row house façade design.



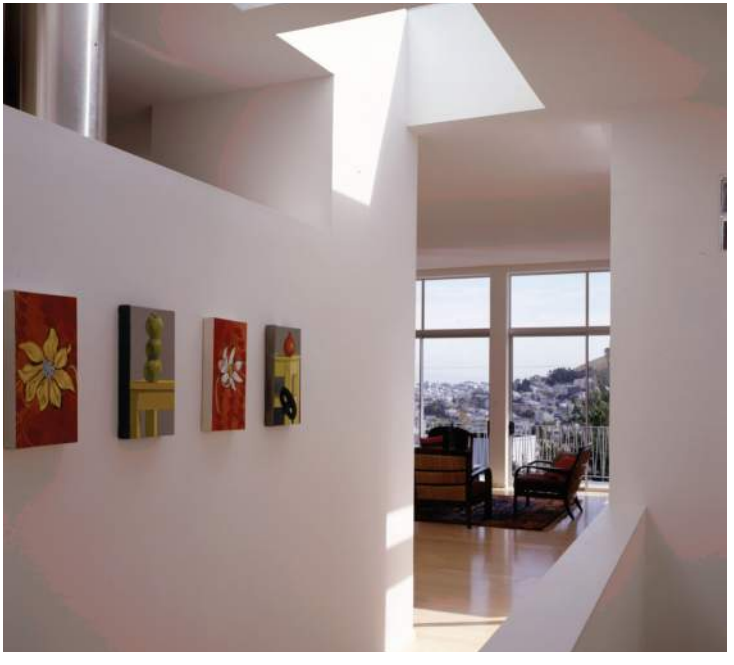
New Residential Zoning for San Francisco

This building proposal was wildly attacked, partly because it lacked (according to some opponents) obvious, perhaps Queen Anne or pseudo-antique, architectural identity, partly because it was fingered as part of a troupe from an "architectural circus" developed on Laidley Street over many years, and partly because an approach used by people resisting change often includes hurling demands fueled by simple ignorance and willful deceit.

But an AIA review board endorsed the design, and the Planning Commission allowed it to proceed. The drawings were even used to combat excessive control in the proposed Residential Zone Controls.

17 Whitney Street

The cow path streets plan of the Fairmont neighborhood features many modest houses from assorted decades past, sometimes on irregular lots. A mix of minimum architectural commitment identifies these simple forms. The Whitney house adds some box forms, a design which developed from the desire to create a large spacious barn-like upper living floor, a single room more opened at each end by the lift of a butterfly roof. Carefully ordered screen walls for center services like kitchen and hall divide a generous dining and living area from an all-purpose room. This complexity of this divide enjoys a constantly changing sunbeam light show, like the residential interiors of Schindler in the 1930s, or M/L/T/W or Esherick, Homsey, Dodge & Davis in the 1960s.

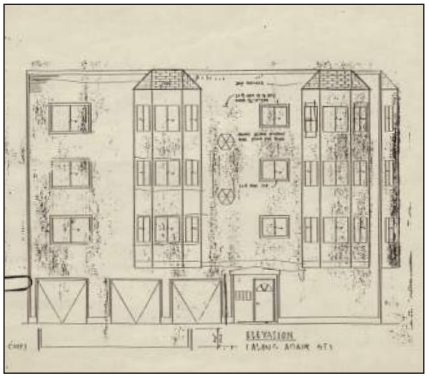


17 Whitney Street

The lack of a close adjacent building wall along one side of a neighboring irregular lot offered opportunity for an unusual source of light and views, and a tiny inset deck. The enclosing plywood plank siding we previously developed is perched on a cement plaster base, a material that erupts to embrace a second floor bedroom bay at the street façade. We chose a window pattern for the bay that was favored by some builders of flat front Italianate houses, because it seemed to suggest a three equal-sided bay. It's a light-hearted comment, as are the two stars-in-motion shaped windows, indicative of something special inside, and which admit odd-pattern sun spots. This version of the rowhouse much enhances life in the clouds.

FOR RENT
CAPP

A 45 Adair



Original Design

Kotas/Pantaleoni Re-Design

This building occupies an important corner across Adair Street from the Capp Street Center building (by David Ireland). The exterior design of the building, as brought to us, was originally proposed as a big box with timid mansards perched on stacked bays. The permit had been bureaucratically suspended until a revision could be agreed upon. Our client, a non-English speaking builder, didn't want to pay for a total new design, but the Planning Department agreed to let us revise the elevation drawings for him.

Rather than beautify the box, we suggested a more vernacular scale, by treating the longer Adair Street façade as a pair of 25-foot wide building segments, to support the context surrounding Ireland's building. All horizontally proportioned windows were reselected vertically proportioned, and pedimental parapets replaced the mansards at the skyline. We lost control of the entrance doorway, so my son Jason was asked by photographer Richard Sexton to stand in front of it for the photo.

Frank Lloyd Wright used to refer to Queen Anne houses as having a "Mary Ann" behind. Who looks at the backside of a row house, which cannot be seen from the public street? We only see one façade, sometimes two. The essence of a building's message is condensed, which shows how minor adjustments can have a major impact upon a "Theater of the Streetscape".

ONE WAY

B Fowler House

Mr. King says it very well.

This upper floor addition to a typical stylistically uncommitted post-World War II house nudges the architectural imagery to reflect its beach front location. The porthole row in part reflects a difficult adaption of a new floor plan atop an existing conventional tight small house plan, and the pent stair housing to a roof deck indicates how much more the revamped house extends the possibilities of visual connection to the larger world around.

C4 | Sunday, August 5, 2012 | San Francisco Chronicle and SFGate.com

BAY AREA

CITYSCAPE *By John King*

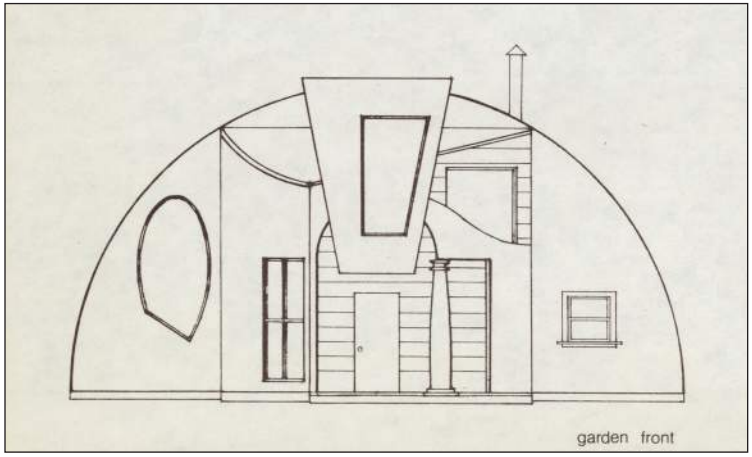
In shipshape in Outer Sunset

Architectural license in some ways is directly related to setting: Structures that hang low as part of a crowd can be more playful in how they meet the world. This house responds to its setting across from Ocean Beach by striking a nautical pose. The details are suggestive rather than cartoonish, such as the third floor's circular windows, and they shine despite a fog-worn exterior that could use fresh paint. You wouldn't do something like this on the skyline. But on the outer edge of the Outer Sunset, west of the West, why not have fun?

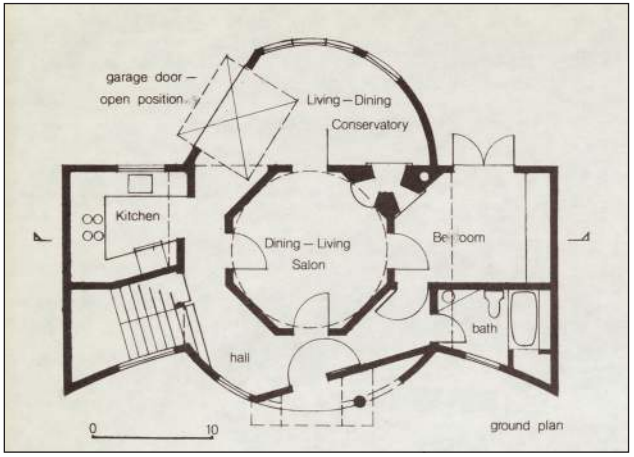
Photos by John King / The Chronicle

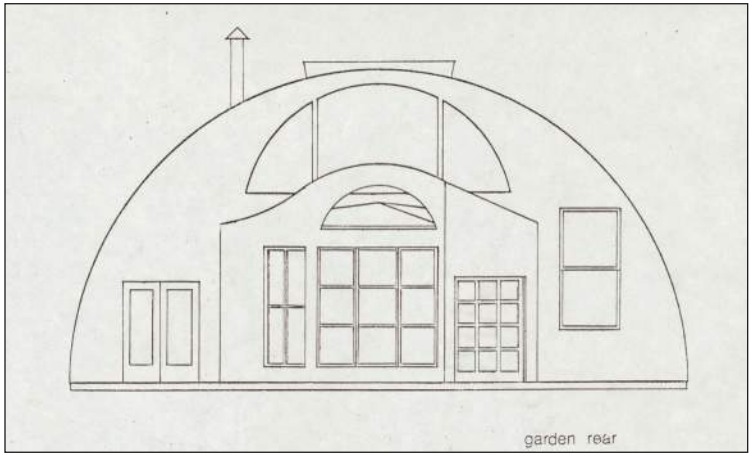
2400 Great Highway **Architect:** Original, unknown; 1992 renovation, Kotas/Pantaleoni
Style: Tugboat modern | **Size:** 3 stories | **Date built:** 1952, expanded 1992

Cityscape is a weekly look at a distinct slice of San Francisco brought your way by jking@sfchronicle.com.

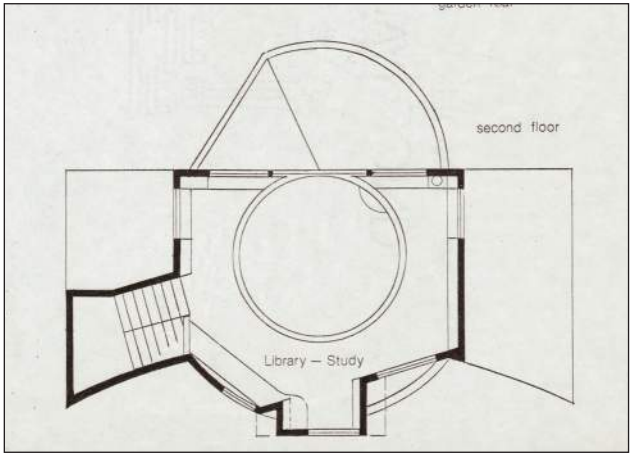


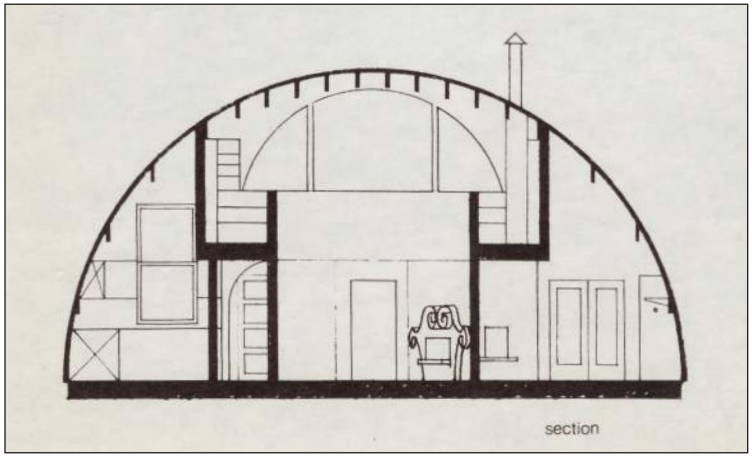
garden front





garden rear





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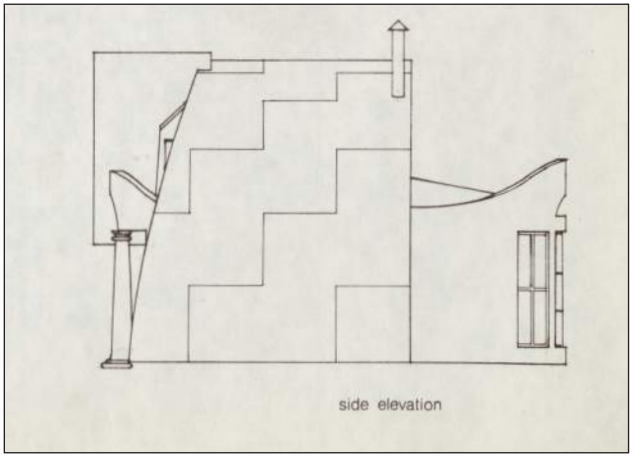
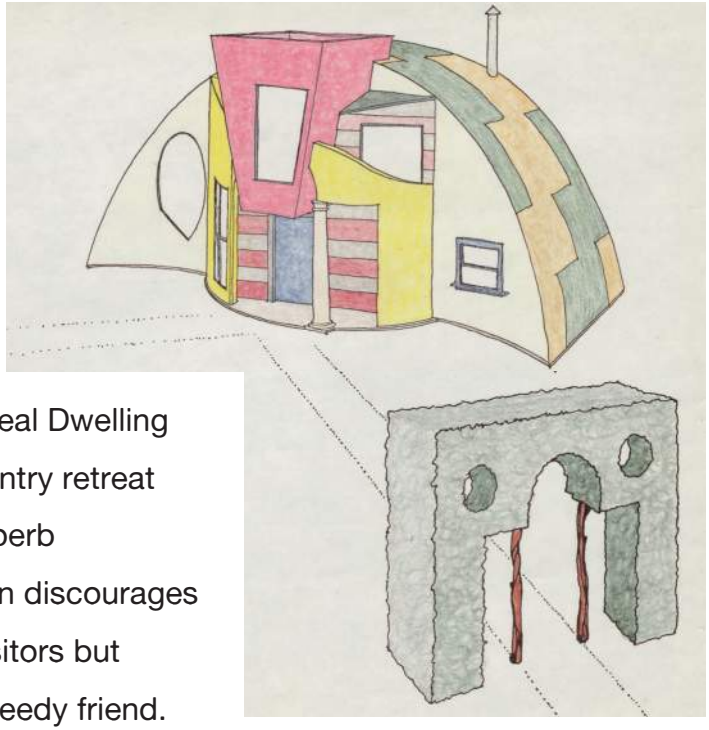


side elevation

C Villa Caprice

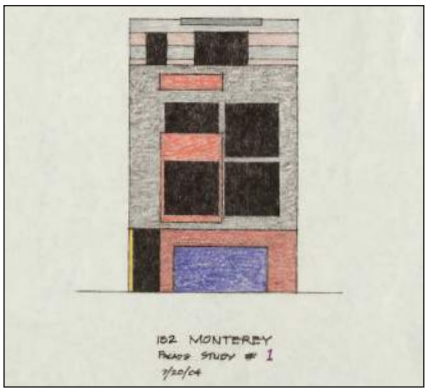


These drawings discharge an obligation to a catalytic friend of architecture.

The Villa Caprice evolved from reflections on an Ideal Dwelling suitable for the country retreat of a collector of superb miscellany. The plan discourages casual weekend visitors but accommodates a needy friend.

A cheap, convenient and elegant life is possible within this hierarchy of sweetness and light.

D Monterey Boulevard



Always useful as a design approach is a faithful attention to what can be called Plainstyle, if not modernism or minimalism. The façade organization here reflects the incredibly mild Corbu allusion of the adjacent 1961 houses, allowing for adjustment by more recent manipulation of industrially derived architectural imagery as well as more formal row house considerations.

This small but vertical house (25’ x 25’ foot print, 4 stories high) is much enlivened as a place to live by the set-back penthouse floor, clad in alternative color-stained 2 foot plywood “planks” differentiating it from the integrally colored cement plaster mother form. This affects the visual weight, if not height, of the building, and also can read as an afterthought or later addition. And the set-back offers a rooftop terrace and expansive view across the Mission Terrace valley, an experience not unlike some of Corbu’s 1920s dwellings. A balcony railing of flame-neon Plexiglas brightens the interior on a foggy day.

The southern orientation of the house, combined with oversized sliding doors used as windows (with railings over the opening) and the shallow one-room depth enhances the micro climate. It actually overheats on sunny winter days. Rooftop solar panels were included also, to take advantage of this exposure.

Selected Publications

Arquitectura	Oct 1979
Global Architecture / Japan	1982
Bay Area Houses	1988
SF Magazine	1989
Masonry Design West	May 1989
New Architecture SF	1989
The Cottage Book	1989
Sunset	Oct 1991
New York Times	Aug 1992, Feb 1994
Progressive Architecture	Nov 1992
Noe Valley Voice	Oct 1992
Abitare	Dec 1992
10 Percent	Dec 1992
Architecture	July 1993
Ville Giardini	March 1995
Parallel Utopias	1995
Hyperwest	1996
Toward a Simpler Way of Life	1997
Bay Area Style	2004
SF Chronicle	Nov 2006, April 2013
NoCal Home & Garden	various